

SECTION II

CHAPTER 5

PERSONNEL ATTITUDES AND ISSUES

OVERVIEW

Having a sense of common vision is important in any organization to ensure that the organization and its personnel are moving in unison toward a common goal(s). Having a common vision is not only about making sure that all parties are aware that they are in the same boat and rowing, but even more importantly, that they are rowing in the same direction. The impact of not sharing a common vision will be very noticeable in the quality and quantity of work performed, but also with the spirit and passion that the work of the organization is accomplished.

The perceptions shared by members of an organization can be extremely important in either establishing, or conversely distorting, that sense of a unified common vision. Whether accurate or not, and regardless of the myriad of factors that can influence them, the individual and/or shared perceptions of members of an organization can, and often do, become their reality. If there is a perception of distrust, or lack of mutual respect, between members of the organization, and/or between the members of the department, the governing body, and/or the members of the community, the goal of successfully achieving that sense of common vision will be difficult, if not impossible.

As part of this organizational assessment process, MRI interviewed numerous stakeholders from both inside and outside the Berwick Fire Department. The study team spent numerous hours in the town over three days and assessed the attitudes and performance of the members of the Berwick Fire Department. Data of all sorts was gathered and analyzed in order to paint a picture of what motivates and directs the members of the department. Part of this process involved administering an anonymous survey instrument to members of the department to obtain feedback from them on a wide range of issues that impacts them daily in their duties as firefighters.

OBSERVATIONS

The introduction to the Berwick Fire Department's policy and procedures manual contains the following mission statement, which also identifies the department's vision and its values.

The mission of the Berwick Fire Department is to protect lives and property through proactive prevention, education, and response.

We are committed in providing quality fire, rescue, and first responder emergency medical and special services to the community while continually seeking improvements in the quality of life of our citizens.

Our vision is to meet or exceed our customer's expectations. We will utilize our member's expertise in achieving this vision. Our Department will deliver the highest quality service within the limits of the provided resources, and we will protect and improve our members' capabilities on a daily basis.

The Berwick Fire Department has these values:

- *Provide a safe, healthful, and environmentally friendly emergency response system.*
- *Support our on call and career staff with adequate incentives and awards to achieve top level performance.*
- *Meet or exceed local, state, and federal standards for emergency agencies.*
- *Use a business model that address adequate services levels within the limits of available resources.*
- *Actively recruit the most qualified persons without regard to race, color, or creed.*
- *Communicate openly and honestly within the organization as well as with the public and related organizations.*

This statement should provide the very foundation for the Berwick Fire Department and why it exists. This multi-faceted mission statement should be providing that broad direction that everything else that the fire department does is going to build upon. The study team believes that overall, the Berwick Fire Department is fulfilling its mission, and generally does so in a very good manner, especially considering the challenges and limitations that it faces, particularly operating with minimal staffing. However, it is also our opinion that considering the perceptions of the current political climate in the town by and as it pertains to the fire department, the fulfillment of the department's mission on a daily basis is more a product of the normal sense of duty, responsibility, and service, that is the very hallmark of the fire service, and one of its proudest traditions, rather than a clear sense of common vision for the Berwick Fire Department and its future. We did find it interesting that the mission statement does not note that the mission is supported and advanced by training, one of a fire department's most important functions.

As has been previously noted, at the time of this assessment in late 2012, Chief Dennis Plante was leading the Berwick Fire Department. Chief Plante has been the fire chief for more than 20 years, and in a tradition that is not uncommon in smaller departments

that serve small towns, he assumed the department's highest position from his father who also served as fire chief for many years. When he first assumed command of the Berwick Fire Department, it was an all-volunteer department and Chief Plante served as a part-time fire chief, while concurrently serving the town as its code enforcement officer. In 1999, the annual town meeting approved upgrading the status of fire chief from a part-time to a full-time position, at which time the chief relinquished his code enforcement duties. Among the department's nine other officers, three are directly and closely related to the chief. His brother is the assistant chief, the department's number two position, and two of his sons serve the department as captains.

During our field visit to Berwick, the MRI study team met at separate times with the call firefighters, as well as the career firefighters, for the purpose of soliciting their input, and discerning their perspectives regarding the department they are members of. During the meeting with the call firefighters, all of the attendees except two were officers; and the two non-officers were the department's dispatcher and a junior firefighter, not active firefighters. While it is possible that the officers are the department's most active and dedicated members, and by virtue of this fact are more involved than many other members, we cannot be certain this is the case. Several members of the department did request private interviews with the study team and these were conducted by phone.

While they certainly do not place him on a pedestal, or believe that he cannot improve his management and/or leadership of the department, overall the members of the department appear to support the chief and believe that he always has the best interests of the town, its citizens, and the fire department at heart. However, because they do not believe that the chief, nor the members of the department, brag about, or toot their own horns, they feel the average citizen of the town does not know what the fire department really does, or understands the time commitment necessary to be a trained and active firefighter. The chief acknowledges that over the years he has done a less than adequate job educating the department's external customers, the taxpayers of Berwick, about the department's operations and needs. He has been successful though at obtaining grants for the procurement of equipment, in addition to the grant for hiring the career staff.

The consensus among all of the members is that, overall, the Berwick Fire Department is a very good fire department and can hold their own, operationally, against any other fire department in the Seacoast area. As with most departments, they feel the department's greatest asset is its personnel and the dedication and commitment they exhibit which keeps the department moving. The members of the department work well together, feel they do an excellent job, and despite any obstacles that get in the way, exhibit a good sense of *esprit de corps*. They stressed that for most members of the department, the motivation for what they do is not making money, rather it is giving back to the town they call home. The career firefighters were unanimous in their opinion that the Berwick Fire Department is a good place to work, and for the most part, especially when the current political climate is removed from the equation, are happy with their jobs.

The members believe very strongly that they have the best apparatus and equipment in the area. All of the apparatus, and most of their equipment, are relatively new. As a result, the members take a lot of pride in it and work very hard to maintain it, both operationally, as well as appearance wise. The study team also concurs with this assessment.

Most of the members felt very strongly that training was one of the department's most positive attributes. They feel the training officer does an outstanding job in this important arena. With training needs continuing to increase, they believe that as time goes on that he will need to delegate more of these duties to other officers. It was also felt that the formation of a training committee might be beneficial to the department.

Despite these positives, morale in the department is strained and definitely not as high as it should be. The members trace the start of the downward trajectory back six or seven years and things have gotten progressively worse. They feel that while the majority of people in town still support them, the constant criticism from a vocal group of residents is taking its toll on member motivation. Unfortunately, we were unable to validate this belief during our interviews and interactions with various cross sections of the department's external stakeholders, since although still only a statistically small sampling of the town's overall population, we heard diametrically opposed views regarding the department, and specifically, its leadership.

Compounding the problem even further is a perception, whether real or imagined, that the governing body, particularly the current one, has allowed the "bashing" to continue and in fact has given tacit approval to it. It is a well-known fact of life that whether accurate or not, perception can very easily become reality. As a result, the problems related to this constant criticism and a perceived lack of support from the current board has increasingly become an overriding issue and a distraction within the Berwick Fire Department.

The department does not have a formal mentoring program and this was mentioned as something that the department should consider instituting to promote better development among the firefighters, particularly the newer ones. Members felt that the department should implement some type of formal officer development program that will assist the current officers with doing their jobs and will better prepare future officers to assume the increased duties and responsibilities. The study team concurs with both of these suggestions and recommends they be included as part of the development of a long-range plan for the department.

As we have heard a number of times throughout this assessment, one of the most significant impacts on the Berwick Fire Department in recent years was something they had no control over whatsoever, the closing of the town's major employer, Prime Tanning. When this business was still operating, they allowed employees, who were members of the fire department, to leave work to respond to calls. This partnership, while informal, reliably provided the fire department with 10 to 15 members available for

daytime responses. The closing of this facility had a profound negative impact on the fire department, its staffing, and consequently, on its ability to respond to incidents during the day. In a short period of time, the Berwick Fire Department went from a department that reliably provided mutual aid to many of its neighbors, particularly during the day, to one that frequently required mutual aid assistance, even for relatively minor incidents. Not only did the department lose its valuable daytime staffing and response resources, it lost a number of members permanently as they moved from town in search of other employment.

The loss of Prime Tanning was the catalyst for the department and town to pursue the SAFER grant to hire the career firefighters and make the transition from an all call department to a combination one. While the members feel overwhelmingly that hiring the career firefighters was a good thing, and is very positive for the department, there are times where it has proven to be a double-edged sword. For instance, the call firefighters feel at times they are no longer needed during the day and are underutilized. As a result, if a major incident were to occur, there is concern that the call members may not be around or respond. In addition, the career firefighters have informally been designated to function as crew chiefs at night and on weekends when they are off duty. This has, at times, caused confusion and resentment, as it is not consistent with the department's current policy or organizational chart. Crew chiefs have traditionally been the most senior firefighters in the department.

Additional issues/concerns that were brought to the attention of the study team include:

- While the chief holds monthly officers' meetings, there is sometimes a breakdown in communications and/or the chain of command as there is a direct link between the career lieutenant and the chief during business hours.
- All officers need to have some type of administrative responsibilities again to assist with managing, administering, and leading the department.
- Recent revisions to the department's response procedures seem to be having a positive impact. The revisions include changes to how apparatus is staffed and responds. They also include changes that allow lower ranking officers, such as captains and crew chiefs, to develop their skills as officers and serve as emergency incident commanders.
- Training and time commitment issues are a problem and place strains on the current members of the department. However, the members seem to think that an expansion and revisions to the duty crew program may help to lessen the required time commitment.
- The department does not have enough qualified drivers.

- By virtue of the town's demographics and the location of the existing station, travel distances and response times are, and will continue to be, problems.
- Despite what appears to be a generous budget, funding always seems to be a problem for the department. At times, there has reportedly not been money available to send new members for their entry physical, to equip them with personal protective equipment (PPE), or send them to training.
- To offset funding shortages, the firefighter's association raises money and donates equipment to the department.
- The career firefighters perform the vast majority of the department's non-emergency duties and work. This may be having an impact on the call firefighters' morale, as they do not always show up even for apparatus inspections; they only show up for emergency calls.
- Information management and requests for data/statistics is a growing problem. Some type of clerical assistance is needed.
- There are concerns that as the criticisms of the department have continued to escalate, the department is retreating from public view. For instance, apparatus is now kept in the station, with the apparatus bay doors closed, unless there is a call, rather than using them for various duties to maintain crew integrity.
- A few members privately expressed concern that the singular family involvement at the department's highest ranks creates a very closed shop as far as the running of the department goes and that there is way too much favoritism and/or cliquishness involved in the department. There was a deputy chief, the department's #3 position, that was well respected and provided a bridge from the chief and assistant chief to the remainder of the department. Unfortunately, he passed away several years ago and that critical link and stabilizing presence and voice of reason was lost. This position has remained vacant ever since.

Despite these concerns, overall the members are very proud of their department and believe that it is generally heading in the right direction. It was even acknowledged that many of the issues the department is currently experiencing are the proverbial growing pains and they will be resolved over time with new or revised procedures and/or operations.

It should also be noted that several retired and former members of the department, including one who left town due to relocation of their employment, also contacted the study team and were interviewed. These members all generally shared a very positive view of the department and their time associated with it. They were unanimous in saying that they missed the department and were sorry when they decided to terminate their affiliation. Conversely, several other former members of the department, who the study team was advised may have been able to provide some counter perspective, did not respond to multiple phone messages inviting them to contact us should they wish to provide input and/or share their perspectives.

During the period December 11, 2012, to February 8, 2013, MRI conducted an on-line survey concerning attitudes of personnel within the Berwick Fire Department. Twenty-three members (76.6% of the 30 current firefighting personnel) participated in the survey, which is an excellent response to an instrument of this type. Of those, sixteen (69.6%) completed the survey in its entirety; seven (30.4%) did so partially. Since it is impossible to determine why those who only partially completed the survey chose to not answer certain questions, key findings as listed below reflect the percentage of personnel who completed that respective question, rather than the overall sample.

In order to develop a clear understanding of the overall survey responses/results, the depth of the issues and/or concerns that are significant to members of the department, and in some cases, the context they were made in, it is extremely important for the reader to also examine the comments that are voluntarily included to provide additional enhancement to the standardized survey question responses. In addition, there are a number of questions seeking the respondent's perspective or opinion that required a narrative response from the participant, rather than simply answering a standardized survey question. Because of the widely varied responses, these questions are summarized in this section.

Of those who completed the survey, 10 (43.48%) were officers and 13 (56.52%) were firefighters. These figures indicate that 100% of the department's current officers participated in the survey while only 65% of the firefighters did. This scenario is somewhat consistent with the previously discussed meeting the MRI study team had with the call firefighters during our field visit where all of the attendees except two were officers; and the two non-officers were the department's dispatcher and a junior firefighter, not active firefighters. The team is concerned that these snapshots may be symptoms of deeper morale issues within the department that may stem from a number of different sources. Some of those undercurrents were revealed in the narrative answers and/or comments associated with various questions in the survey.

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, 13 respondents (65%) rated the Berwick Fire Department as an 8 to 10 as a place to volunteer, while 7 (35%) rated it as a 5 to 7. No one rated the department below a 5.
- 15 respondents (78.9%) either strongly agree or agree that the department is well managed. Three members (15.8%) were neutral and one person (5.3%) disagreed.
- In response to the question, "Do you feel the physical work environment is conducive to your professionalism, efficiency and effectiveness?", 14 respondents (70%) answered yes, while 6 (30%) responded no. A follow-up question regarding what could be done to improve the physical working environment solicited multiple responses on the need for a new or renovated station, noting that the existing station lacks such basics as shower and locker room facilities.
- On a 1 to 10 scale, only 3 respondents (15%) rated morale in the Berwick Fire Department either an 8, 9 or 10, while 11 (55%) rated it between a 5 and 7, and 6 (30%) placed it at either a 3 or 4. A follow-up question on what could be done to improve morale listed stopping the political attacks, the need for improved facilities, and improved leadership by the officers as major issues.
- Twelve of 18 respondents (66.7%) rated the department's training between and 8 and 10; 5 (27.7%) rated it either a 6 or 7, and 1 member (5.6%) rated it a 4.
- 16 respondents (88.9%) rated their personal protective equipment as between 8 and 10 while two (11.1%) rated it as a 6 or 7. No one rated his or her PPE below a 6.
- 16 respondents (88.9%) also rated the department's apparatus as between 8 and 10, while 2 (11.1%) rated it between 5 and 7. No one rated the apparatus below a 5.
- When asked to rate the support from the town, 12 of 18 respondents (66.7%) rated it at between 1 and 3. The other 6 (33.3%) rated it either a 5 or 6. Not a single respondent rated support from the town higher than a 6, an issue which should be of concern to the town's leaders.
- When asked to rate the quality of the department's dispatching, just 1 member (5.6%) rated it an 8; 13 (72.2%) rated it between 5 and 7, and 4 (22.2%) gave it a 3 or 4.

- Nine respondents (50%) rated the department's internal communications as either 8 or 9 (no 10s), 8 (44.4%) rated it as between 5 and 7, and 1 (5.6%) rated it as a 4.
- In response to whether the department's existing policies and procedures provide sufficient guidance in accomplishing their job, 15 respondents (83.3%) either strongly agreed or agreed, while 3 (16.7%) were neutral.
- 16 respondents (88.9%) either strongly agree, or agree, that the Berwick Fire Department is effective in delivering fire, rescue and EMS services to the town. One member (5.6%) was neutral and 1 other (5.6%) disagreed.
- 15 members (88.2%) strongly agree or agree that training opportunities are distributed on a fair and equitable basis; 1 (5.9%) is neutral, and 1 (5.9%) disagrees.
- All 18 people who responded either strongly agreed (7/38.9%) or agreed (11/61.1%) that the department has implemented adequate safety procedures.
- Six members (33.3%) strongly agree that department members follow appropriate safety procedures during emergency incidents. Nine additional personnel (50%) agree; 2 (11.1%) are neutral, while 1 (5.6%) disagrees.
- 10 members (55.6%) strongly agree, while 8 more (44.4%) agree, that the department has implemented adequate standard operating procedures/guidelines.
- Regarding whether the chain of command works effectively, 12 members (66.7%) agree that it does, and 6 other members (33.3%) feel that it does not.
- 14 respondents (77.8%) answered yes regarding whether the Berwick Fire Department works effectively with other public safety agencies, while 4 (22.2%) replied no.
- All 18 of those who responded (100%) felt the department utilized the Incident Command System effectively.
- 14 of 18 respondents (77.8%) felt that the fire department values and advocates for them, while the remaining 4 (22.2%) did not.
- Eleven members of the department (61.1%) either strongly agreed, or agreed that there was a high level of mutual respect across all ranks of the

department. Two members (11.1%) were neutral, and 5 members (27.8%) disagreed.

- 13 personnel (72.2%) reported they felt they had never been threatened or intimidated by a co-worker. However, 5 personnel (27.8%) reported that they felt they had at least occasionally.
- When asked if they felt the fire department administration provides fair and equal treatment to all employees, 9 (56.2%) either strongly agreed, or agreed that they did; 3 (18.7%) were neutral, and 4 (25%) disagreed.
- Regarding whether internal discipline for policy and rule violations is administered fairly and consistently the responses were similar and consistent. Ten members (62.5%) either strongly agreed or agreed; 2 (12.5%) were neutral, and 4 (25%) disagreed.
- Most members either strongly agree (5/31.25%), or agree (8/50%) that the department's supervisors provide quality guidance and support. The remaining 3 (18.75%) are neutral.
- A total of 7 members (43.75%) strongly agree that they receive adequate training and 9 (56.25%) agree.
- When asked if they believe the community values the services provided by the fire department, 3 members (18.75%) strongly agreed; 7 (43.75%) agreed; 2 (12.5%) were neutral; 3 (18.75%) disagreed, and 1 (6.25%) strongly disagreed.
- 13 members (81.2%) either strongly agreed (3) or agreed (10) that all department members share a common understanding of current goals and a vision of the future. Three other members (18.8%) were neutral.
- The majority of members, 10 (62.5%), strongly agree they are proud to be a member of the Berwick Fire Department. An additional 5 (31.25%) agree, while 1 member (6.25%) is neutral.

Some of the underlying concerns that appeared throughout the narrative responses to questions in the survey or when asked to add additional comments to expand upon and/or clarify a standardized response answer are:

- The political climate that is eating away at the department's morale and the perception of the level of support for the department provided by the community. Compounding this concern is perception by some department members that rather than "fighting back" the chief is adopting more of a

"bunker mentality" of trying to keep himself and the department out of sight.

- The need for additional personnel/staffing to adequately handle the department's duties/responsibilities.
- The size, condition, and continued functionality of the existing station.
- One in four members of the department who responded to the survey view the department as suffering from favoritism or "cliquishness" particularly when it comes to the officers. There needs to be improved leadership and consistency among the officers.

It is important for us to note also that in an effort to get feedback/input from members of the department, and use it as a tool for making improvements, the Berwick Fire Department conducted its own internal and anonymous survey of members of the department in March 2011 using Survey Monkey. This survey consisted of several standardized questions, as well as several questions that required a narrative response. A total of 17 members responded to the survey. The results of the survey were presented to the members of the department at a meeting on March 25, 2011. A corrective plan of action was also formulated.

Key findings of this study include:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, just 6 members (35.3%) rated the department as an 8 to 10 in response to the question, "How valued do you feel as a member?" Eight members (47%) rated it as a 5 to 7, and 3 members (17.7%) rated it between a 1 and 4.
- When asked how technically skilled they felt the department was, 6 members (35.3%) rated it between 8 and 10; 10 members (58.8%) rated it between 5 and 7; and 1 member (5.9%) rated it between a 1 and 4.
- Only 1 respondent (5.9%) rated the department between 8 and 10 when asked about the level of morale in the department. Just 3 additional members (17.7%) rated between a 5 and 7, while 13 members (76.5%) rated morale between 1 and 4 (five of these personnel – 29.4% rated morale as a 1, the lowest possible rating).

Common threads found in answers to narrative type questions asked include:

- What do you like about the department?
 - The people in the department are its best asset.
 - The new apparatus and equipment
 - Helping people and knowing we made a difference

- What would you like to see changed about the department?
 - Morale needs to be improved
 - Issues between the career and volunteer staff need to be addressed and resolved.
 - Officers (both career and volunteer) developing better people and leadership skills.
 - More appreciation needs to be shown to people/members and criticism needs to be constructive in nature rather than just critical.
 - The need for better officer assessment and selection.
 - The need for more apparatus drivers.

- How can we improve morale throughout the department?
 - A number of these responses echoed those in the previous question.
 - Leaving the town politics out of the department.
 - Just addressing the issues that are impacting the department rather than letting them fester.

- In light of diminishing response numbers (number of personnel responding) per call, is there anything that is discouraging you from coming down (responding)?
 - Feeling of not being needed, particularly during the day, due to the career staff.
 - Response procedures not encouraging response by the call personnel such as chief officers handling the call and returning the apparatus and/or personnel before they arrive, and career staff taking two apparatus to day time incidents.
 - The attitude of some of the officers.

Corrective actions that were presented to the membership in March 2011 included:

- Addressing leadership and management issues including the "I don't care" attitude.
- Reviewing existing vehicle response guidelines
- Reviewing existing training expectations
- Reviewing promotional guidelines

- Review of the perceived issues that appear between the career and on call personnel
- Review of all guidelines related to the Berwick Fire Department

Chief Plante should be commended for taking the initiative to perform this type of survey and solicit the input and feedback of members anonymously that they may have been hesitant to provide in a public forum. His plan of action seemed to be appropriate also. However, the MRI study team could not determine the extent to which these issues had been addressed (at least to the satisfaction of those who had concerns), nor the impact that other more current issues such as the local political climate, may have had on the department's overall morale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- II-5-1.** The Berwick Fire Department should continue to work at addressing and correcting the issues identified in their own internal survey conducted in 2011, with the goal of not only improving morale in the department, but operations as well.
- II-5-2.** One of the new town manager's first, most important, and ongoing priorities should be to attempt to rebuild the critical bridge between the fire department, the board of selectmen, the police department, and the whole Berwick community. This effort will require an inclusive, team based approach, and open and honest discussion to determine exactly what the real and legitimate issues are, as opposed to the perceived ones, and most importantly, begin to address and resolve them. It will take an honest commitment by all parties involved, and will involve the need for compromise and possibly even the need for the involved parties to apologize for past actions in order to clear the air and move forward together.
- II-5-3.** The fire department leadership, its membership, the board of selectmen, the town manager, and members of the community must sit down and have an open and honest discussion regarding perceived and/or actual issues between the department and the community it protects, in order to have any reasonable chance at all of forward progress.
- II-5-4.** The board of selectmen and the town manager should take an active role in setting appropriate goals and vision for the fire department. Town officials should include a cross section of residents (not just those with pre-determined views/opinions) and the department in an open and honest discussion as part of the goal setting process.
- II-5-5.** The town manager and board of selectmen should establish an annual goal-setting workshop with the fire chief, and possibly his senior staff, to develop

the sense of common vision necessary to improve the department and the quality of fire, rescue, and EMS services the town receives.

- II-5-6.** The town and the department should publicly recognize the achievements of the department in reaching the various established goals as they are accomplished.
- II-5-7.** The department must take whatever steps are necessary to address issues that inevitably develop in combination fire departments between the career and volunteer firefighters. If they are equals in the department's organizational chart (and for a combination fire department to be effective they must be), then they all must be held to the same standards.
- II-5-8.** The department must take proactive steps to address perceived leadership and management issues in the current officer corps. If the members of the department do not have confidence in, or respect, their officers as people (as opposed to respecting the rank), every aspect of the department's operations will be negatively impacted. This is particularly true in on call type fire departments where members can just not show up if they are unhappy with the climate in the department. Crew chiefs/lieutenants must supervise, captains must administer and manage, and the fire chief and his assistant fire chief must provide leadership.

Some ways the department can address these concerns are:

- Updating the department's SOGs regarding training and operations
 - Ensuring there is accountability at all ranks of the department
 - Providing team building opportunities
 - Providing leadership training for officers
 - Through the use of performance evaluations
 - Through more effective delegation at the upper levels of the department
- II-5-9.** Due to the unique family connections involved in the department's senior leadership, these officers should adopt a much more inclusive, participatory, and transparent leadership, management, and decision making style to preclude any perceptions that they are basing decisions on any aspect of operations on family considerations, as opposed to what is best for the town and the department. This can be done through strengthening the town's Nepotism Policy as noted in Section II, Chapter 6, through the use of policy driven standards and procedures to address or prevent issues and by diversifying those who serve in the department's senior leadership.

- II-5-10.** The department should update its mission statement, vision and/or values if necessary based upon the results of other recommendations in this report. The mission statement, vision, and values should be posted prominently in various locations in the station and should also be on the home page of the department's website.
- II-5-11.** Morale within the Berwick Fire Department must continue to be improved. Efforts to put the political turmoil behind it, developing a renewed sense of common vision, if necessary, maintaining open lines of communication, delegating responsibility and authority, improving leadership among the department's officers, and correcting other deficiencies such as the lack of qualified drivers will help to instill a renewed and/or increased sense of pride in the organization.
- II-5-12.** An updated manual of department policies and procedures is one of the keys to achieving a shared vision for department operations. All personnel must be trained on the contents of the manual and held accountable to accomplish department goals by established means. The Berwick Fire Department is encouraged to continue its ongoing program of updating the department's SOPs ensuring that the process involves representation from a broad cross section of the department's membership.

Note: There are additional recommendations contained in other sections/chapters in this report that will address other aspects of the membership's perceptions and issues regarding the department.

SECTION II

CHAPTER 6

PROFESSIONALISM AND ACCOUNTABILITY

OVERVIEW

The MRI study team's evaluation of the Berwick Fire Department revealed a department that from a technical perspective is well managed and administered. The department is well regarded and respected for its fire fighting and emergency incident capabilities. Its apparatus fleet is well maintained and well equipped. All of the equipment is tested, inspected, and maintained as required and/or recommended. The department's training program is very good and utilizes recommended best practices in the fire service. The record keeping system is thorough and well organized. There is an up-to-date manual of Standard Operating Guidelines. All of these areas are in much better condition than in many of the fire departments that we evaluate. In this regard, the Town of Berwick and its citizens should be very proud of their fire department. They should be confident that they are well prepared to meet the challenges that they will face on a regular basis on the emergency scene.

Despite its very positive evaluation on the operational issues, the department is not without its weaknesses. These concerns focus on issues that expose significant potential lapses in professionalism and accountability at different levels of the department. However, before we begin a discussion on these issues, it is important to point out that the purpose of this study was to perform an operational assessment of the Berwick Fire Department. Our focus was not to perform an internal investigation of the department, or to investigate and/or address specific complaints against members of the department.

OBSERVATIONS

The number of allegations and concerns regarding potential lapses in professionalism and accountability expressed by both members of the public, as well as a few fire department members is troubling. It was difficult to ascertain in many cases which people had actually witnessed specific instances of inappropriate behavior and who was merely repeating something that they were told occurred. It is also very obvious to the MRI study team that there are antagonists, in some cases very extreme, whose motivations and agendas were not always clear. It is apparent to the MRI study team that these issues, and the constant battling between the two sides, is causing a significant erosion of public trust in the fire department and in town government.

One of the root causes of the issues with professionalism and accountability is the very membership of the fire department itself, and more specifically the senior leadership.

As has been previously noted, members of the same family occupy all the top four positions in the fire department. This situation is not at all uncommon in small towns where the leadership of the fire department, the police department, or even the entire municipal government has evolved over many years. There are frequently multiple generations and branches of the same family in place who have built the department from its earliest years. Family members can achieve top leadership positions, and often assume them from other family members. In most cases, this is the result of a strong and unselfish dedication to community service.

In our constantly evolving society, this situation can create, at the very least, the perception of inappropriateness. In these situations, there is a tendency to develop a groupthink, or perhaps more appropriately a family think, way of managing and leading. And of course, there is always going to be the perception that key decisions are not actually being made in the formal meetings, but rather in the family's kitchen or family room. When something does go wrong, or there are allegations of any type made against a member of the family who is in control, there is an automatic assumption that nothing will happen, regardless of the reality of what happened. This situation has become a major issue in Berwick.

The Town of Berwick has a nepotism policy in place that is part of the town's personnel policies. The policy, which was most recently revised on March 2, 2010, states:

"Nepotism. (1) The Town reserves the right to consider blood and legal relationships in its hiring practices. (2) It is against Town Policy to hire on a full-time basis the father, mother, husband, brother, sister, wife, or child of a present Member of the Board of Selectmen or the Town Manager. (3) Relatives shall not be put in the position of supervising relatives."

The members of MRI's study team are not human resource specialists, nor are we attorneys. It appears to us that the policy does explicitly prohibit the singular family chain of command found at the top of the Berwick Fire Department. Unfortunately, the policy is not clear regarding whether this prohibition against relatives supervising relatives is (or even can be) applied retroactively. Should the town decide to do so, consideration should be given to how the loss of the experience found in those senior members may, or may not, impact the department's operational capabilities. With no succession plan currently in place, there is a good chance that there is a very limited, if any, pool of personnel ready to assume these positions.

Beyond the clarity that appears to be the case in (3) of the policy, sentences (1) and (2) are much less clear, and in fact seem to be very weak. Sentence (1) states the town reserves the right to consider those relationships, it does not say that they must consider them, nor does it prohibit hiring relatives. Sentence (2) only specifically prohibits hiring relatives of the members of the board of selectmen and the town manager, and even then only for full-time positions. It is our belief that if making a strong statement regarding nepotism is priority of the board, the nepotism policy must

be significantly strengthened. The board would need to seek legal counsel on whether the policy could be applied retroactively, and if so, to what extent.



We want to stress again that it was impossible for us to verify the accuracy of these complaints, and well beyond the scope of this study to investigate any of these allegations. However, we believe they help to illustrate that erosion in public trust that seems to be occurring in town.

Both sides in the ongoing disputes in town have attempted to use social media to their advantage. As was noted elsewhere in this report, the Berwick Fire Department should be commended for implementing a social media policy in early 2012. It is unclear to the study team if this policy has had a positive impact in this regard.

The Town of Berwick's policy is that complaints regarding any member of a specific department are forwarded to the department head for investigation and appropriate action. However, this system is not going to work effectively when the investigation is going to involve family members. It is human nature for blood to be proverbially thicker than water, and the objectivity of any such investigation is going to be called into question. When there is no action taken regarding the allegation, the perception will again be that something is being covered up due to family ties.

In the interest of fairness and balance, we must stress that in addition to our own assessment of the department from the start of this chapter, we heard many stories about the fire department performing exemplary service to the town and its citizens. A number of residents strongly praised the department and its professionalism. They question what the true motivations of the department's critics are, and in most cases believe they are a very small but vocal minority of those who live in town.

We live in a world and society where accepted norms, permitted behaviors, and standards of professionalism and conduct are constantly changing and evolving. Things that were acceptable 10 or 15 years ago are no longer accepted, tolerated, or permitted. Over time, the vision, direction, goals, and objectives of an organization can

change, sometimes dramatically. Long-time members of an organization may resist the changes and have difficulty getting with the new program. We believe this is one of the issues in Berwick as well.

It is the responsibility of the board of selectmen to set the vision and direction for municipal departments and employees. Based on that vision, goals and objectives should be developed with input from the town manager, department heads, employees, and the members of various boards and committees. It is then the town manager's responsibility to make sure that everyone is working together, in unison, toward those established goals and objectives and thus the vision. Department heads must make sure that their department is working toward those goals regardless of whether they agree with them or not. That is part of leadership, an area that seems to need to be strengthened at all levels of the town government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- II-6-1. The Town of Berwick should revise and significantly strengthen its nepotism policy. In consultation with their legal counsel, they will need to determine whether they can in fact make the policy retroactive, and if so, to what extent that is possible. Part-time employees should also be covered by the policy.
- II-6-2. The Town of Berwick should develop a formal complaint investigation procedure for handling complaints regarding any employee or agent of the town. The town manager must ensure that a thorough and objective investigation is completed. The town manager must coordinate and follow-up on these investigations. He must also ensure that he, or another department that he designates, conduct the investigation if there is even the slightest possibility that full objectivity, or even the perception of it, is not possible.
- II-6-3. When warranted, the town manager should utilize the authority given to him/her under state law to conduct a full internal investigation regarding an employee, an incident, an event, an allegation, etc., and take appropriate action.

- II-6-5. The Town of Berwick should adopt a policy requiring any town employee, full-time, part-time, or volunteer, to immediately report to their department head if they are arrested for any reason, or if their driving privileges are revoked or

suspended in any state. The department head should promptly notify the town manager.

- II-6-6. All members of the fire department should be required to take a formal oath of office both at the time they are initially appointed, as well as any time they are promoted. If the current members of the department have not been sworn in, they should all be required to do so.

- II-6-7. **Members of the fire department should understand that whether on duty or not, that at all times they not only represent the Berwick Fire Department, but the fire service in general. They should conduct themselves with the utmost professionalism at all times, and they need to fully understand they do not have the right to choose who they want to help.**

SECTION III

FUTURE FIRE/EMS SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

SECTION III

CHAPTER I

REGIONALIZATION AND SHARED SERVICES

OVERVIEW

In the recent economic climate, with budgets being scrutinized at all levels of government, resources are being forcibly stretched to attempt to address many competing priorities, including education, health and welfare needs, the environment, and maintaining the community's infrastructure, all of which compete with fire protection for an ever shrinking pool of limited funds. In some communities, private organizations that once were funded outside the tax base are now seeking additional public support in order to avoid service cuts or even insolvency. In the fire department and emergency services realm, demands for services are increasing at a steady rate, particularly for emergency medical services (which most fire departments provide today). Meanwhile, taxpayers generally resist paying more in taxes to fund even critical public safety services, meaning difficult decisions will need to be made regarding service levels.

These realities are forcing many fire departments today to turn to a variety of joint ventures to provide the level of service their community's need, while simultaneously conserving and sharing scarce resources. They are applying a wide variety of approaches, ranging from the informal sharing of individual personnel or equipment, to the formal consolidation of departments across jurisdictional lines to form regional emergency services providers. While this concept has been slow to gain traction in New England and in the northeast, it is common in many areas of the country. The continuum of such cooperation might include:

- Informal mixing and matching in which one jurisdiction borrows a technical specialist from another to help with a short-term project or problem.
- Combining to share such specialized services or equipment, through a contract, as hazardous materials response vehicles, special heavy-rescue vehicles or aerial ladder trucks, dispatching services, apparatus maintenance or information services. These types of arrangements are generally referred to as shared services agreements.

Few communities and/or fire departments can handle even a relatively basic and ordinary fire involving several rooms in a single family dwelling today alone, and without the need for assistance from surrounding communities. These needs almost always exceed the limits of a single functional area and extend to the entire range of fire protection operations increasing the reliance on such tools as mutual aid agreements (on-request or automatic). Instituting these types of agreements has grown in

importance as the availability of resources has dwindled. In addition, an increasing number of adjacent communities are looking at consolidating their fire and other emergency services into regional endeavors.

Consolidation itself offers a full range of alternatives that can be explored beyond the scope of this evaluation.

- In a functional consolidation, separate fire departments are retained, but one or more duties normally performed by one department are assigned to members of another department, or duties normally performed separately by all departments are assigned to a combined new organization under the control of all participating organizations (e.g. joint training center).
- In a partial consolidation, separate fire departments are retained, and a special agreement is formulated to handle specific challenges; an example is shared staffing of a fire station located where it can serve two or more jurisdictions readily.
- In an operational consolidation, sometimes called a merger, separate fire departments are combined in total into one unified department through a legal process.

Mutual aid agreements provide for reciprocal assistance for emergency incident management, fire, rescue, emergency medical services, hazardous material, and other disaster response services. Such an agreement might specify joint response to all alarms in a given geographic area or automatic response by the facility closest to the incident, regardless of jurisdiction.

Whatever the approach taken to interjurisdictional cooperation, the best interests of the public must be the driving motivator. In fact, many communities may join two or three mutual aid organizations in order to fulfill their specific, or anticipated, response needs.

OBSERVATIONS

The MRI study team was advised by a former town manager that at one time, within the last six to eight years he and the town manager in South Berwick had some discussions regarding the fire and emergency services. These discussions were an outgrowth of the automatic response agreements that currently exist for responses along the Route 4 corridor and centered upon station locations and fire apparatus purchases.

The 2003 analysis of the Berwick Fire Department by Maine Fire Training and Education also weighed in on the issue of shared services, regionalization, or consolidation. It suggested a possible functional consolidation or a partial "amalgamation" whereby firefighters from any one of a number of departments who may

participate could respond and operate in the other departments' jurisdictions and incidents whether or not their department was formally involved. They pointed to a successful program (at least at that time) that involved four different fire departments in Cumberland County, Maine. Personnel, apparatus, and even facilities are freely shared among the participating fire departments that operate in a closely coordinated and unified manner, yet retain their separate and autonomous natures and identities as well.

A former Berwick town manager had suggested many years before the 2003 study that he believed that a "Tri-Berwick" Fire Department would be a viable, cost effective (and resource effective) way to provide fire protection to the three Berwicks. The department would remain a primarily on call fire department supplemented by a small daytime career staff. We concur that this is an issue that warrants additional study and serious consideration. However, we believe the idea could be expanded to include additional area communities such as Lebanon.

The Berwick Fire Department belongs to the Community Mutual Aid Association, comprised of 10 local towns, which shares mutual aid resources such as tanker trucks for areas where large amounts of water are required for fire control and aerial ladder trucks to access and fight fires in larger structures. They also have access to an air van and cascade system for refilling SCBA. Berwick is not a member of the larger Seacoast Fire Officers Mutual Aid District, although that group's resources, including Incident Management Support Teams are available to the town.

The Berwick Fire Department participates in several other shared services endeavors. The department participates in a regional dispatch and communications center that is operated by the South Berwick Police Department. Other participants in this center include the Berwick Police Department, South Berwick Police, Fire and EMS, and Rollinsford EMS.

The Town of South Berwick also has a regional apparatus and vehicle service facility that Berwick and North Berwick participate in. This facility previously employed a technician that was Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT) certified, however, he is no longer with the town. The current technician, while reported to do a good job, does not possess the EVT certification.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- III-1-1.** The Berwick Fire Department should explore the feasibility of joining other mutual aid organizations to fulfill specialized response needs related to technical responses (e.g. hazardous materials, specialized rescue, and responder rehabilitation), and incident command and control assistance for larger-scaled events.

- III-1-2.** The Town of Berwick and Berwick Fire Department should enter into discussions with surrounding communities and fire departments to discuss opportunities for additional sharing of resources, services and operations, up to and including, examining the feasibility of either partial, or full, consolidation and/or regionalization of emergency services.
- III-1-3.** The Town of Berwick, in consultation with the Berwick Fire Department, should enter into discussions with, at a minimum North Berwick and South Berwick, to utilize Berwick's career firefighters as a shared or regional resource. Doing so would enhance the levels of service available to those communities, while simultaneously reducing the cost to the Town of Berwick.
- III-1-4.** When considering its station/facility needs and locations, particularly with regard to any consideration of a sub-station in Berwick, the Town of Berwick should also consult with the surrounding communities to determine the feasibility of sharing this resource as well.

SECTION III
CHAPTER 2
CAPITAL PLANNING

OVERVIEW

With replacement costs of fire apparatus ranging from \$450,000 for a very basic, no frills pumper, to \$1,000,000 or more for specialized apparatus such as aerial ladders and towers, there is a need to provide long-term capital planning to effectively budget for such a large expense particularly in a smaller community like Berwick. In addition to routine, future apparatus purchases, Berwick is also faced with having to expend significant financial resources related to either extensive renovation and/or construction of new fire station facilities.

The fire department must maintain an apparatus replacement program far in advance to not only identify future expenditures, but more importantly to aid in identifying future funding needs and potential sources of revenue. The real driver behind apparatus replacement needs is not the front-line units; it is the condition of reserve units, or the oldest unit(s) in the fleet. Effectively meeting standards of coverage at all times means maintaining a reliable fleet of the reserve unit(s). Anytime a front-line unit is out of service for repairs, the personnel use a reserve apparatus. As a result, reserve apparatus must be reliable enough to meet the emergency needs of the community. This is where fire departments traditionally have experienced the most failures of apparatus during responses.

Apparatus replacement should occur before the oldest (reserve) units are no longer reliable and when the front-line units have not reached similar reliability status. For a fire department like Berwick, it should be expected to replace its engines, tanker, and ladder weighing the following factors:

- Apparatus age
- Engine hours
- Pump hours
- Condition
- Technical obsolescence and safety features/issues
- Maintenance costs

OBSERVATIONS

It was reported to the MRI study team that until a few years ago Berwick did have a long-term capital budget in place. However, this document has not been updated since the economic downturn in 2008.

With the above variables, along with the current activity levels and anticipated demands on the fleet, consideration should be given to replacing the 1990 Engine in approximately 3 years. Replacement of the 1997 Ladder in approximately 10 to 12 years should be anticipated. An aerial ladder is a specialized resource that could be shared on a regional or multi-town basis. Berwick may not need a ladder of its own if one is available in an adjacent community.

Capital planning for fire facilities may be more complex for communities like Berwick. With the cost of fire facility renovations and construction of new facilities exceeding \$1,000,000, an in depth fire station feasibility and location study with the goal of improving response times to remote locations of the community and to accommodate the future facility needs of the fire department should be undertaken as soon as possible. The study should include the feasibility of relocating versus significantly renovating/expanding the current fire station, and should seriously consider the need to construct a second small fire station in Berwick to address travel distance and response time issues. Any study regarding fire stations should include construction cost estimates from reliable construction / architectural firms.

The capital planning process for fire station facilities needs to explore the different methods of funding. Funding methods can include:

- Municipal bonding
- Capital reserve fund accounts established and funded in advance
- Government-backed loans,
- Grants (e.g. United States Department of Agriculture Rural Assistance)

RECOMMENDATIONS

III-2-1. The Town of Berwick should re-implement their capital budget as a financial planning tool for future needs and expenditures. The plan should be updated to reflect current and future needs and funding realities.

III-2-2. The Berwick Fire Department should establish a 5, 10, 20-year apparatus replacement plan to include budgetary estimates to present to town officials to assist in the short and long term capital planning process. This will help prioritize needed town-wide projects and minimize potential spikes in the taxation necessary to fund projects.

III-2-3. The Town of Berwick and Berwick Fire Department should give consideration to the following apparatus replacements in the foreseeable future:

- Replace the 1990 Engine in approximately 3 years
- Replace the Ladder/Quint in 10 to 12 years

Planning for future funding of apparatus purchases may include the initiation of a Capital Reserve Fund designated for that purpose. Consideration should also be given to regionalizing or sharing major expenditures for specialized apparatus such as ladder/aerials.

III-2-4. With temporary repairs to the existing station only estimated to last approximately five years, and a station that is outdated and obsolete for its current needs and operations, the Town of Berwick needs to immediately begin considering their future options relative to fire station(s) and their location(s). We recommend that the town initiate an in depth fire station feasibility and location study, as soon as possible, with the goals of:

- Providing the fire department with a station, or stations, that are up-to-date, energy efficient, and meet the needs of the department both now and in the future.
- Possibly reducing travel distances and thus improving response times to remote locations of the community.

This study should examine the feasibility of relocating the main fire station, or significantly renovating and expanding the existing facility. Consideration should also be given to the possible cost/benefit of building a small fire sub-station in another section of Berwick. This study should include construction costing estimates from reliable construction / architectural firms.

The study should be undertaken as soon as possible in order to provide adequate time to evaluate options, seek public input and approval, secure necessary funding, obtain suitable land if relocation is determined to be the best option, design the facility(ies) and to commence construction within five years provided that no further significant structural issues develop.

SECTION IV

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

and

ABOUT MRI

SECTION IV

CHAPTER 1

SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of key recommendations from each of the chapters. It is not all-inclusive or arranged in order of importance.

SECTION I – FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

CHAPTER 1 FIRE OPERATIONS AND INCIDENT ANALYSIS

- I-1-1. The Berwick Fire Department should work with South Berwick dispatch to insure that all incidents that occur in Berwick are being recorded, and to develop consistent response time statistics to determine compliance with NFPA 1720.
- I-1-2. The Berwick Fire Department should continue its very good pre-incident planning program with the goal of having an up-to-date pre-plan for every business, commercial, and industrial occupancy (including schools, churches, etc.). Schools, day care centers, and other locations where large numbers of people assemble, such as churches, should receive a very high priority for development of pre-fire plans.
- I-1-3. In consultation and cooperation with its neighboring departments, the Berwick Fire Department should enter into automatic aid agreements and update their running card assignment system so that it specifies the number and types of resources that should be dispatched immediately on the initial standardized box alarm or response to various types of reported emergencies. These initial responses would include resources from Berwick and surrounding communities. While the recommendations contained in this report can be adjusted/revised based upon a risk management process or pre-incident plan, these processes take time. In the interim, we recommend that the following minimum number of resources be dispatched to structural fire and emergency incidents:
- Reported structure fire (dwelling, apartment, commercial building, etc.) smoke in the building, interior gas leak, etc.
 - 3 engines
 - 1 or 2 tankers (non-hydrant areas of town)
 - 1 aerial ladder
 - 1 chief officer

- Working or “all hands” structure fire (in addition to above)
 - 1 additional engine
 - 1 additional ladder
 - 1 or 2 additional tankers (non-hydrant areas)
 - 1 or 2 additional chief officers
 - Additional specialized resources as may be required
 - Second, third, fourth alarm, etc.
 - 3 engines
 - 1 ladder
 - 1 chief officer
 - Additional specialized resources as may be required (tanker task force, large diameter hose task force, etc.)
- I-1-4.** Although more stringent than the requirements found in Table 4.3.2 of NFPA 1720 for rural communities, through the utilization of automatic aid agreements with neighboring communities, the Berwick Fire Department should attempt to achieve a goal of having a minimum of 16 personnel on the scene of any reported structure fire within 14 minutes.
- I-1-5.** The Berwick Fire Department should attempt to significantly improve its initial unit, on scene response times, particularly during times when the career staff is not on duty.
- I-1-6.** Utilizing plotting and modeling technology, the Berwick Fire Department should perform a risk/benefit analysis, and evaluate any potential impacts upon response times that may result from a switch from a one (1) station to a two (2) station deployment model that would support construction of a sub-station.
- I-1-7.** The Berwick Fire Department should establish an incident safety officer program. All department officers should receive safety officer training, obtain safety officer certification, and an operational procedure should be implemented that results in a guaranteed response of at least one (1) (preferably two [2]) additional chief officer on every working/all hands incident.
- I-1-8.** The Berwick Fire Department should ensure that they have a sufficient number of properly trained and qualified driver/operators. Priority should be given to conducting a comprehensive training program to ensure that as many personnel as possible who have more than one (1) year of service with the department are trained and qualified to operate all department apparatus.

CHAPTER 2 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

- I-2-1.** The MRI study team recommends the fire department immediately obtain licensure as a non-transporting EMS service pursuant to the administrative rules of the Maine Department of Public Safety. The town should consult with its legal counsel to determine if the fire department should continue to provide EMS responses while not licensed.
- I-2-2.** All members of the fire department should be required to obtain some level of EMS training and certification. All career personnel should be required to be emergency medical technicians (EMT), either at the basic or advanced level, while all on-call personnel should be a minimum of advanced first aid certified, or some other similar type of basic medical training that encompasses topics such as bleeding control, basic splinting, spinal immobilization, and oxygen administration, with EMT preferred.
- I-2-3.** The MRI study team recommends that the fire department establish a relationship with a local hospital that can serve as the medical resource hospital for training and quality assurance oversight. The most appropriate hospital is typically the facility that receives the majority of ambulance patients from Berwick (*e.g.*, Wentworth Douglass Hospital in Dover, New Hampshire).
- I-2-4.** The MRI study team recommends that the town evaluate its EMS needs. Although interviews revealed a "good working relationship" with Berwick's current contracted ambulance service, it is always in the best interest of the community to explore other EMS methods as the number of medical emergency calls increase. Such an evaluation should include discussions with neighboring communities to determine if a regional ambulance system could provide high-quality patient care in a cost-effective manner.
- I-2-5.** The fire department should evaluate its first responder EMS capabilities. Failing to respond to 50%, or possibly more, of these incidents is unacceptable and creates a false sense of security. If the department is going to be dispatched to these incidents, and provide this service, they must do so 24/7. Consideration may also be given to reducing the types and thus the numbers of calls they are dispatched to. Many departments only respond to what are known as a life threat call, such as heart attacks, unconscious persons, etc.

CHAPTER 3 STAFFING

I-3-1. The Berwick Fire Department should apply for a federal SAFER grant for on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel such as tuition reimbursement, health care benefits, tax abatements, etc.

I-3-2. The Berwick Fire Department should make it a priority to develop an active on-call recruitment program led by the call assistant fire chief. At a minimum, this program should consist of:

- Developing a recruitment brochure and mailing it to all residents
- Performing public outreach through the local media
- Contacting community and service groups
- Developing an eye catching banner on the town's website
- Placing signs recruiting call/volunteer personnel at the main entrances to town
- Placing signs call/recruiting volunteer in local businesses particularly high volume locations
- Establishing an active and visible presence at the local high school

Although time consuming, consideration should also be given to conducting a door-to-door recruitment campaign.

I-3-3. In collaboration with neighboring communities, the town should give consideration to hiring a call/volunteer "Recruitment and Retention Coordinator" to develop, implement, and coordinate recruitment and retention efforts and programs for the cooperating communities.

I-3-4. The Berwick Fire Department should set a realistic goal of recruiting at least 12 to 15 new members over the next three (3) years and, simultaneously, set a goal of increasing the overall call member force to around 40 - 45 active, qualified personnel.

I-3-5. The Town of Berwick and the Berwick Fire Department should attempt to enter into partnerships with local businesses to allow their personnel to respond to emergency incidents during working hours without any financial penalty. The Maine Department of Labor has developed a model policy for such purposes (see Appendix A).

I-3-6. The Town of Berwick should explore the feasibility of encouraging and allowing town employees to serve as call firefighters.

- I-3-7.** The Town of Berwick should give consideration to lengthening the hours of coverage provided by the career staff. We recommend that the workday start at 8:00am rather than the current 8:30am and change the end-of-shift time from 4:30pm to 6:00pm. By this time of the day, many of the call personnel should be home from work and more available for response.

As an alternative, the town could consider having two personnel report for duty at 8:00am hours and go off duty at 4:00pm. The other two personnel could report at 10:00am and go off duty at 6:00pm. This option would keep at least two personnel on duty, but would not result in an increase in hours.

- I-3-8.** The Town of Berwick and the Berwick Fire Department should give consideration to utilizing call personnel to provide in station staffing evenings from 6:00pm until perhaps 11:00pm or midnight and during daytime hours on the weekends. Personnel who serve at least one duty shift per week, for which they should be compensated, would maintain their member in good standing status with the department. When on duty they could also complete their required training, participate in various department/station projects, pre-fire planning, etc., and possibly even recruitment activities.

While they could have the option of going home at the conclusion of their in-station duty time, the on duty crew should be responsible for response to any incidents that are dispatched from 2300/2400 hours until a pre-determined time the next morning, typically either 0600 hours, or 0700 hours.

- I-3-9.** The Berwick Fire Department needs to insure that it has a sufficient number of properly trained and qualified driver/operators. Priority should be given to conducting a comprehensive training program to ensure that as many personnel as possible who have more than one (1) year of service with the department are trained and qualified to operate as many of the department's apparatus as possible. Priority training should be for Engine 2, Engine 3, and Squad 5, as these units will respond most often.

- I-3-10.** The Berwick Fire Department should attempt to comply with the initial fire attack requirements recommended by NFPA and required by OSHA, within a reasonable time frame, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

- I-3-11.** Although requiring significantly more personnel than the requirements found in Table 4.3.2 of NFPA 1720 for rural communities, through the utilization of automatic aid agreements with neighboring communities, the Berwick Fire Department should attempt to achieve a goal of having a minimum of 16 personnel on the scene of any reported structure fire within 14 minutes. While we would like to see these personnel on scene quicker, the realities of long travel distances, which translates to longer response times in rural communities, makes that goal unrealistic.

- I-3-12. In consultation with whichever organization will be providing the primary EMS transport service for the Town of Berwick, the level of EMS first responder service that is provided by the Berwick Fire and/or Police Department, along with appropriate personnel needs, should be determined. However, whatever level of service is determined that the town will provide (and we believe this service should be provided primarily by the fire department), it should be provided 24/7, not just when personnel may be available.
- I-3-13. The Berwick Fire Department should establish a training and certification goal for personnel that includes the following:
- Firefighter I certified
 - SCBA qualified with up-to-date fit test and proficiency evaluation
 - Medically qualified (required by OSHA for SCBA certification)
 - Hazardous materials operations certified
 - Completed Incident Management System I-100, I-200, I-700, and I-800 training
 - Completed all mandatory annual training requirements including Blood Borne Pathogens and Exposure Control
 - Be CPR certified and possess an appropriate level of emergency medical training or certification

CHAPTER 4 TRAINING

- I-4-1. The Berwick Fire Department should periodically conduct a formal training needs evaluation and assessment for the purpose of determining training program priorities and to ensure that the current program continues to meet the department's operational needs.
- I-4-2. The Berwick Fire Department should establish a goal for all personnel to possess a minimum of a Firefighter I certification.
- I-4-3. The Berwick Fire Department should establish a goal for all members of the department to be certified to drive and operate at least the department's most important apparatus (Engines 2 and 3 and Squad 5).
- I-4-4. Additional, high intensity training on various subjects, including periodic live fire training, should be conducted on a quarterly, or semi-annual, basis at a formal fire academy where appropriate training facilities, structures and props are available.
- I-4-5. The Berwick Fire Department should implement periodic basic skills proficiency evaluations for all personnel. These proficiency evaluations, consisting of standardized evolutions, can be based upon recognized standards and benchmarks, in conjunction with performance criterion and

benchmarks, established through evaluation of, and based upon, Berwick Fire Department operations and procedures.

- I-4-6. The Berwick Fire Department should facilitate fire instructor training for any experienced, qualified members of the department who wish to take it. All officers should be formally certified at a minimum of Fire Instructor Level I.
- I-4-7. The Berwick Fire Department should insure that all department members are trained/certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and ranks. The Berwick Fire Department should also further enhance the level of Incident Management training provided to the members of the Department. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated, it is our recommendation that all personnel be trained to the ICS-200 level. All officers should be trained to the ICS-300 level (several already exceed this level). All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level (both chiefs and two of three captains already have completed this training).

NOTE: While outside the scope of this study, the Town of Berwick should conduct an internal, town wide assessment to determine current compliance with NIMS training requirements for all town employees and elected officials.

- I-4-8. The Department should strongly encourage its officers to obtain a certain level of fire officer certification as a job requirement such as Fire Officer I for lieutenant and captain, and Fire Officer Level II for assistant fire chief and fire chief.
- I-4-9. The department should require that all officers be certified as incident safety officers. Additional personnel who may be interested should be encouraged to take this training and obtain this important firefighter safety certification.
- I-4-10. In recognition of the fact that a majority of the Berwick Fire Department's dispatches are for medical type incidents, the department should encourage as many members as possible to become certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). At a minimum, all members should be certified at some appropriate EMS first responder or advanced first aid level of training. All career personnel should be required to obtain an EMT certification and maintain it for the duration of their employment.

It may be possible to collaborate with the town's ambulance contractor to provide EMS training for fire and police personnel.

- I-4-11. The Berwick Fire Department should continue to 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 Fire Department Instructors Conference in Indianapolis. Information gained at this training can then be brought back and delivered to other members of the department.

- I-4-12. The Berwick Fire Department should make an effort to send some of its officers to the National Fire Academy, particularly the Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP). The training officer should be enrolled in the Academy's *Management of Training Programs* course. As with any outside training, training reports should be completed and copies of certificates placed in the personnel and training files.
- I-4-13. The Berwick Fire Department should seek annual funding in the training budget to enhance, and upgrade as necessary, its training resources such as manuals, DVDs, and subscriptions to other available training resources.
- I-4-14. The Berwick Fire Department should, as part of its written communications system, develop Training Bulletins, which would be issued to serve as reference with regard to tested and approved methods of performing various tasks, and Safety Bulletins, which should be issued to serve as references with regard to general and specific safety and health issues.

CHAPTER 5 FIRE PREVENTION

- I-5-1. Fire prevention, particularly public fire education, should continue to be promoted as a key component of the vision of the Berwick 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, fire deaths, and fire injuries in the community. Every member of the department should be responsible for fire prevention.
- I-5-2. In conjunction with the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office, the Berwick Fire Department should establish a formal in-service fire safety inspection program. The on-duty personnel can be assigned with the responsibility for "in-service" inspections to identify and mitigate fire hazards in buildings, and to familiarize firefighters with the layout of buildings, identify risks that may be encountered during firefighting operations, and to continue the development and/or updating/revising of pre-incident plans. These personnel can also be assigned responsibility for permit inspections. Optimally, each commercial and industrial occupancy in the town should be inspected on an annual basis. The authority to conduct these inspections, and enforce a formal fire code, would need to be established by the town thru the adoption of an ordinance.

In order to establish an in-service inspection program, it will be necessary to:

- Train personnel on proper procedures (all career personnel should be Fire Inspector I certified and/or as required by the Maine State Fire Marshal)
- Develop standard operating procedures/guidelines for in-service inspections
- Establish inspection schedules
- Establish a system for documenting inspections and notifying property owners of fire hazards
- Establish a follow-up inspection system to ensure that hazards have been mitigated

I-5-3. The Town of Berwick should give serious consideration to adopting a local ordinance to require the installation of automatic fire suppression (sprinkler) systems in all new construction, including residential occupancies.

While the United State has made tremendous progress at reducing fire injuries and deaths through the wide spread use of smoke detectors, these devices provide only passive fire protection. In other words, they alert the occupants to a fire and hopefully allow them to escape safely; however, they do nothing to either extinguish or, at a minimum, contain/control a fire until the arrival of the fire department. Sprinkler systems on the other hand provide active fire protection; that is they will hopefully either extinguish or, at a minimum, contain/control the fire until the fire department arrives. Study after study has shown sprinklers to be effective more than 95% of the time at reducing deaths, injuries, and property damage. A number of studies have shown that when installed at the time of construction, residential sprinkler systems add only 1% to 2% to the overall cost of construction, less than the installation of granite counter tops or a number of other cosmetic upgrades.

Over the long-term, the installation of residential sprinkler systems will not only save lives and property, but can potentially level off, or eventually even reduce, the costs associated with funding for manual fire suppression services (the local fire department) as the impact and demand for their services increases as the community grows. This consideration is particularly important in a rural community such as Berwick where response times will, by nature, be longer and staffing will be much more limited. In addition, the town will be hard pressed to increase the number stations, apparatus, and personnel due to the high costs associated with each of them. The installation of residential sprinklers are the most cost effective way to try to keep those costs in check, while over time improving fire protection community wide.

- I-5-4. The department should continue its year round public fire safety education programs, in the schools, and throughout the community. Additional personnel should be encouraged to participate in this program. If possible, personnel presenting the programs should seek to obtain formal training and even certification as Fire and Life Safety Educators.
- I-5-5. The Berwick Fire Department should revise and update its lesson plans for conducting public fire education programs. These lesson plans should be reviewed on a periodic basis, and then revised/updated as necessary in order to ensure that they are current with the most up-to-date information, skills, and techniques.
- I-5-6. The department should develop an additional module to its record keeping/management database to allow for the completion of public education reports (and possibly eventually fire inspection reports) rather than create a fire/incident report, as is the current practice. These activities could be classified as such, or as "tasks" rather than "incidents".
- I-5-7. The Berwick Fire Department should continue to update its website 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. Should the town and department implement a more proactive fire prevention inspection/code enforcement program, the department should then work actively to make on line permitting, inspection scheduling, etc. a reality.
- I-5-8. The department should continue with its excellent pre-incident planning program. These plans are an excellent resource for firefighters when they are dealing with an emergency. The department should strive to eventually have a pre-incident plan for every commercial occupancy in the town including all schools, day care centers, and public buildings. Once developed, updating and revising the pre-plan as necessary can be done in conjunction with an annual inspection and/or tour of each premises.

CHAPTER 6 FIRE APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT

- I-6-1. The MRI study team recommends that the Town of Berwick and the Berwick Fire Department develop a comprehensive capital improvement plan (CIP) for apparatus, major equipment, and capital facility needs. The plan should be incorporated into the town's capital improvement plan. The plan should also take into consideration potential funding strategies, such as bonding, lease-purchase agreements, and grant opportunities. The fire chief should develop the CIP in collaboration with other fire departments in the mutual aid system in order to avoid the duplication of very expensive, highly specialized equipment that can be shared within the mutual aid system.

- I-6-2. The MRI study team recommends that planning should begin soon as the 1990 Quality Pumper (Engine 3) should be replaced within the next three years.
- I-6-3. The Berwick Fire Department should continue to insure that all pumps, ladders, hose, self-contained breathing apparatus, and personal protective equipment are inspected on an annual basis and the excellent record keeping system maintained.
- I-6-4. The Berwick Fire Department should initiate quarterly air quality testing of the new air compressor. Air quality should be a minimum of Grade D.
- I-6-5. The MRI study team recommends that the fire department purchase and maintain the necessary EMS equipment and supplies to be compliant with State of Maine EMS requirements for a licensed first responder agency.

CHAPTER 7 FIRE DEPARTMENT FACILITY

- I-7-1. The MRI study team recommends that a certified fall protection system be installed in the hose tower.
- I-7-2. With temporary repairs to the existing station only estimated to last approximately five (5) years, and a station that is outdated and obsolete for its current needs and operations, the Town of Berwick needs to immediately begin considering their future options relative to fire station(s) and their location(s). We recommend that the town initiate an in depth fire station feasibility and location study as soon as possible with the goals of:
 - Providing the fire department with a station, or stations, that are up-to-date, energy efficient, and meet the needs of the department both now and in the future.
 - Possibly reducing travel distances and thus improving response times to remote locations of the community.

This study should examine the feasibility of relocating the main fire station or significantly renovating and expanding the existing facility. Consideration should also be given to the possible cost/benefit of building a small fire sub-station in another section of Berwick. This study should include construction costing estimates from reliable construction/architectural firms.

The study should be undertaken as soon as possible in order to provide adequate time to evaluate options, seek public input and approval, secure necessary funding, obtain suitable land if relocation is determined to be the

best option, design the facility(ies), and to commence construction within five (5) years provided that no further significant structural issues develop.

CHAPTER 8 BENCHMARKING – COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

There are no recommendations associated with this Chapter.

SECTION II – ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER 1 CHAIN OF COMMAND/ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND SUCCESSION PLANNING

- II-1-1. Managing, administering, and leading a modern day fire department requires a complex set of knowledge, skills, abilities, training, and experience. As a result, the Town of Berwick should maintain the position of fire chief as a full-time, career position. In conjunction with the current chief, they should begin a succession planning process to begin looking toward the future and the changes that will bring to the department.
- II-1-2. As part of the succession planning process, the fire chief should implement a career development program to insure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department.
- II-1-3. When the time comes to select a new chief, through a variety of evaluative and assessment measures, the town should attempt to select a leader who possesses the ideal combination of assets they have identified necessary to meet the unique needs of the Berwick Fire Department to lead it through this critical transition process.
- II-1-4. The town should revise the department's overall table of organization making it more effective and better establishing appropriate hierarchical relationships (Figure II-1-2).

NOTE: Should the department decide at some point to open a sub-station at another location in town, then one of the call captains would be reassigned to that station as the station commander, along with whatever number of lieutenants would be appropriate for the apparatus and personnel resources that would be assigned there.

- II-1-5. In order to stress the fact that the Berwick Fire Department remains primarily a call department, supplemented by a small career staff, the department's second-in-command position should remain a call position.

- II-1-6. The department should reclassify the position of crew chief to lieutenant to better clarify the rank and its responsibilities. As part of this process, personnel seeking to be appointed as lieutenant should be required to complete a formal assessment process and basic skills evaluation.
- II-1-7. In light of his additional responsibilities as the department's training officer and his *de facto* role of being the department's executive officer, the career lieutenant's position should be upgraded to captain.
- II-1-8. All officer positions, from lieutenant to fire chief, should be filled based upon firefighting/emergency services training, certifications, and experience, along with successful completion of a formal, rank appropriate assessment process, and a basic practical skills evaluation.
- II-1-9. All officers should have one or more administrative duties/responsibilities to assist the fire chief with the department's overall management, in addition to their normal emergency scene operational duties and station management responsibilities.
- II-1-10. Consideration should be given to reinstating the annual financial stipend for each of the call officers to compensate them for the time involved with assisting with the management of the fire department. However, with this stipend must come increased expectations and accountability.

CHAPTER 2 BUDGETING AND GRANTS

- II-2-1. The Town of Berwick should carefully monitor the budget management of each department (not just the fire department) to insure that each expenditure is necessary and is being completed for the most cost effective option available.
- II-2-2. As part of the annual budget development process, the Berwick Fire Department should be required to prepare and submit formal written justification, along with any appropriate supporting documentation, for any requested increases in line item funding. There should also be a formal budget meeting with the town manager and/or the board of selectmen as part of the process of preparing the proposed budget.
- II-2-3. The Town of Berwick should develop a capital budget to allow each department, as well as the town in general, to anticipate and plan for large budget purchases such as new fire apparatus, expensive equipment, or building renovations and/or repairs.
- II-2-4. The Town of Berwick should explore the possibility of their career staff serving as a regional or shared service resource. This may involve

surrounding communities such as North Berwick, South Berwick, and Lebanon contributing funding for these personnel. In return, they would automatically respond into those towns to assist with providing a rapid guaranteed response.

- II-2-5. With approval of the board of selectmen and/or the town manager, the Berwick Fire Department should be encouraged to continue to seek out, and apply for, any grants for which they may be eligible. This should include grants from both public and private sources.

CHAPTER 3 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES; RULES AND REGULATIONS

- II-3-1. The Berwick Fire Department should continue its ongoing efforts to perform a comprehensive update and revision of the department's Standard Operations Guidelines Manual, including the addition of mission critical procedures such as, but not limited to, *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Use, Basic Engine Company and/or Truck Company Operations, Vehicle Fires, Vehicle Extrication Operations, Rural Water Supply/Tender Operations, and EMS Operations*. The department should also change the name of the documents from "Suggested" to "Standard", and restructure the manual, removing plans and policies.
- II-3-2. The first operational guideline should identify and explain the components of the revised written communication system, including the use and organization of the Standard Operations Guidelines Manual and other components of the system, such as standardized forms. This procedure should also contain a provision that the entire Standard Operations Guidelines Manual will be reviewed on a least an annual basis and that updates and revisions shall be made at any time, as necessary.
- II-3-3. While "directives" were mentioned to the team, there is no formal mention of them or how they fit into the overall system. The Berwick Fire Department should expand their written communications system beyond just SOGs. This expansion could include General Orders which can place orders, directives, and/or special instructions into written form; Training Bulletins, which would be issued to serve as reference with regard to tested and approved methods of performing tasks; Safety Bulletins, which are issued to serve as references with regard to general and specific safety and health issues; and Informational Bulletins, which are published for the general knowledge of recipients. A numbering system should also be implemented to keep track of these documents for indexing and future reference purposes.
- II-3-4. The Berwick Fire Department should develop and implement a guideline that provides for the documented review of policies, procedures, general orders, etc. that includes a provision requiring each member of the department to

sign that they received the document, have read it, and understand it. This can be done electronically if the town and/or fire department has that capability. However, a hard copy manual of each type of document should still be maintained in the station.

- II-3-5.** The Berwick Fire Department should form a committee to perform a review and update of the department's Rules and Regulations, and revise it into a stand-alone document. This document, which could be further enhanced as suggested below, should then be submitted for approval by the board of selectmen, and then be distributed to, and signed for, by each member of the department. It could then provide an orientation overview and indoctrination to the department's behavioral expectations for new personnel. A number of excellent rules and regulations documents exist and can be used as the basis for the Berwick document. MRI can provide a sample that can be used as a guide/template, if so requested.

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

- A Preamble
- The Department's Mission Statement
- Objectives of the Department
- Purpose of the Rules and Regulations
- Organization
- Membership requirements
- General Rules of Conduct
- Officer Qualifications and Selection (may just reference current department procedure and/or civil service regulations)
- Officer Duties and Responsibilities (may just reference current department procedure)
- Training (may just reference current department procedure)
- Apparatus, Equipment and Protective Clothing (may just reference current department procedure)
- Uniforms and Grooming
- Discipline
- Conflicts Between Department Documents (state statutes, town policy, Rules and Regulations, Operational Procedures, General Orders)
- Other areas that may be agreed upon for inclusion

- II-3-6.** The department's Respiratory Protection Plan/Policy, Infection Control Plan, and the town's Emergency Action Plan should be separated out into their own individual manuals, with the SOG manual containing guidelines necessary to implement and/or comply with the statute, regulation, policy, or plan.

- II-3-7.** State statutes and/or regulations that are applicable to fire departments and the town's personnel policies which are (or should be) applicable to all town employees, including all fire department personnel, should be compiled into their own manuals which should be made available in the station (or on line).
- II-3-8.** The Town of Berwick and the Berwick Fire Department should conduct initial and ongoing/periodic training, as necessary and/or appropriate, on all applicable statutes/regulations, policies, and SOGs for all personnel.
- II-3-9.** The Town of Berwick should revise their personnel policies regarding the hiring of new public safety employees (both full-time and part-time/on call) to mandate, at a minimum:
- Possession of a valid driver's license (all personnel should have their driver's licenses checked on an annual basis)
 - State and federal criminal background check including fingerprinting
 - Drug testing
 - Credit, employment, and reference checks
- II-3-10.** The Town of Berwick and the Berwick Fire Department must make a formal determination where the "official" personnel file for each call firefighter will be located. A policy should then be developed that spells this out. The policy should also identify how files for former members are maintained. If the "official" file is maintained in the town manager's office at town hall, it would make sense, for convenience sake, for a duplicate file to be maintained in the fire chief's office at the fire department.
- II-3-11.** The Town should seek advice from its legal counsel regarding the applicability of the current nepotism policy to 1) part-time rather than full-time employees, and 2) to employees other than blood relatives of members of the board of selectmen and town manager.

CHAPTER 4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT

There are no recommendations associated with this Chapter.

CHAPTER 5 PERSONNEL ATTITUDES AND ISSUES

- II-5-1.** The Berwick Fire Department should continue to work at addressing and correcting the issues identified in their own internal survey conducted in 2011, with the goal of not only improving morale in the department, but operations as well.

- II-5-2.** One of the new town manager's first, most important, and ongoing priorities should be to attempt to rebuild the critical bridge between the fire department, the board of selectmen, the police department, and the whole Berwick community. This effort will require an inclusive, team based approach, and open and honest discussion to determine exactly what the real and legitimate issues are, as opposed to the perceived ones, and most importantly, begin to address and resolve them. It will take an honest commitment by all parties involved, and will involve the need for compromise and possibly even the need for the involved parties to apologize for past actions in order to clear the air and move forward together.
- II-5-3.** The fire department leadership, its membership, the board of selectmen, the town manager, and members of the community must sit down and have an open and honest discussion regarding perceived and/or actual issues between the department and the community it protects, in order to have any reasonable chance at all of forward progress.
- II-5-4.** The board of selectmen and the town manager should take an active role in setting appropriate goals and vision for the fire department. Town officials should include a cross section of residents (not just those with pre-determined views/opinions) and the department in an open and honest discussion as part of the goal setting process.
- II-5-5.** The town manager and board of selectmen should establish an annual goal-setting workshop with the fire chief, and possibly his senior staff, to develop the sense of common vision necessary to improve the department and the quality of fire, rescue, and EMS services the town receives.
- II-5-6.** The town and the department should publicly recognize the achievements of the department in reaching the various established goals as they are accomplished.
- II-5-7.** The department must take whatever steps are necessary to address issues that inevitably develop in combination fire departments between the career and volunteer firefighters. If they are equals in the department's organizational chart (and for a combination fire department to be effective they must be), then they all must be held to the same standards.
- II-5-8.** The department must take proactive steps to address perceived leadership and management issues in the current officer corps. If the members of the department do not have confidence in, or respect, their officers as people (as opposed to respecting the rank), every aspect of the department's operations will be negatively impacted. This is particularly true in on call type fire departments where members can just not show up if they are unhappy with the climate in the department. Crew chiefs/lieutenants must supervise,

captains must administer and manage, and the fire chief and his assistant fire chief must provide leadership.

Some ways the department can address these concerns are:

- Updating the department's SOGs regarding training and operations
- Ensuring there is accountability at all ranks of the department
- Providing team building opportunities
- Providing leadership training for officers
- Through the use of performance evaluations
- Through more effective delegation at the upper levels of the department

- II-5-9.** Due to the unique family connections involved in the department's senior leadership, these officers should adopt a much more inclusive, participatory, and transparent leadership, management, and decision making style to preclude any perceptions that they are basing decisions on any aspect of operations on family considerations, as opposed to what is best for the town and the department. This can be done through strengthening the town's Nepotism Policy as noted in Section II, Chapter 6, through the use of policy driven standards and procedures to address or prevent issues and by diversifying those who serve in the department's senior leadership.
- II-5-10.** The department should update its mission statement, vision and/or values if necessary based upon the results of other recommendations in this report. The mission statement, vision, and values should be posted prominently in various locations in the station and should also be on the home page of the department's website.
- II-5-11.** Morale within the Berwick Fire Department must continue to be improved. Efforts to put the political turmoil behind it, developing a renewed sense of common vision, if necessary, maintaining open lines of communication, delegating responsibility and authority, improving leadership among the department's officers, and correcting other deficiencies such as the lack of qualified drivers will help to instill a renewed and/or increased sense of pride in the organization.
- II-5-12.** An updated manual of department policies and procedures is one of the keys to achieving a shared vision for department operations. All personnel must be trained on the contents of the manual and held accountable to accomplish department goals by established means. The Berwick Fire Department is encouraged to continue its ongoing program of updating the department's SOPs ensuring that the process involves representation from a broad cross section of the department's membership.

Department, but the fire service in general. They should conduct themselves with the utmost professionalism at all times, and they need to fully understand they do not have the right to choose who they want to help.

SECTION III - FUTURE FIRE/EMS SERVICE DELIVERY OPTIONS

CHAPTER I REGIONALIZATION AND SHARED SERVICES

- III-1-1.** The Berwick Fire Department should explore the feasibility of joining other mutual aid organizations to fulfill specialized response needs related to technical responses (e.g. hazardous materials, specialized rescue, and responder rehabilitation), and incident command and control assistance for larger-scaled events.
- III-1-2.** The Town of Berwick and Berwick Fire Department should enter into discussions with surrounding communities and fire departments to discuss opportunities for additional sharing of resources, services and operations, up to and including, examining the feasibility of either partial, or full, consolidation and/or regionalization of emergency services.
- III-1-3.** The Town of Berwick, in consultation with the Berwick Fire Department, should enter into discussions with, at a minimum North Berwick and South Berwick, to utilize Berwick's career firefighters as a shared or regional resource. Doing so would enhance the levels of service available to those communities, while simultaneously reducing the cost to the Town of Berwick.*
- III-1-4.** When considering its station/facility needs and locations, particularly with regard to any consideration of a sub-station in Berwick, the Town of Berwick should also consult with the surrounding communities to determine the feasibility of sharing this resource as well.

CHAPTER 2 CAPITAL PLANNING

- III-2-1.** The Town of Berwick should re-implement their capital budget as a financial planning tool for future needs and expenditures. The plan should be updated to reflect current and future needs and funding realities.
- III-2-2.** The Berwick Fire Department should establish a 5, 10, 20-year apparatus replacement plan to include budgetary estimates to present to town officials to assist in the short and long term capital planning process. This will help prioritize needed town-wide projects and minimize potential spikes in the taxation necessary to fund projects.

III-2-3. The Town of Berwick and Berwick Fire Department should give consideration to the following apparatus replacements in the foreseeable future:

- Replace the 1990 Engine in approximately 3 years
- Replace the Ladder/Quint in 10 to 12 years

Planning for future funding of apparatus purchases may include the initiation of a Capital Reserve Fund designated for that purpose. Consideration should also be given to regionalizing or sharing major expenditures for specialized apparatus such as ladder/aerials.

III-2-4. With temporary repairs to the existing station only estimated to last approximately five years, and a station that is outdated and obsolete for its current needs and operations, the Town of Berwick needs to immediately begin considering their future options relative to fire station(s) and their location(s). We recommend that the town initiate an in depth fire station feasibility and location study, as soon as possible, with the goals of:

- Providing the fire department with a station, or stations, that are up-to-date, energy efficient, and meet the needs of the department both now and in the future.
- Possibly reducing travel distances and thus improving response times to remote locations of the community.

This study should examine the feasibility of relocating the main fire station, or significantly renovating and expanding the existing facility. Consideration should also be given to the possible cost/benefit of building a small fire sub-station in another section of Berwick. This study should include construction costing estimates from reliable construction / architectural firms.

The study should be undertaken as soon as possible in order to provide adequate time to evaluate options, seek public input and approval, secure necessary funding, obtain suitable land if relocation is determined to be the best option, design the facility(ies) and to commence construction within five years provided that no further significant structural issues develop.

SECTION V

CHAPTER 2

ABOUT MRI

Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) provides quality service at an affordable price. We have the technical knowledge and practical experience that others cannot offer because we hire the best in the municipal consulting industry. This is evidenced by a high level of implementation of MRI's recommendations by its clients. Municipal Resources is capable of performing multiple projects at the same time because of the depth that we have acquired through the number of employees and affiliates we maintain. We also have the ability to draw upon a wide array of talent because of our unique business approach. Our clients have come to expect Municipal Resources to provide for whatever they need and we fulfill their expectations.

Municipal Resources, Inc. was founded in 1989 by six former municipal and state government managers, with both public and private professional experience. Municipal Resources is dedicated to providing professional, technical, and management support services to municipalities and schools throughout New England. Municipal Resources operates offices in two locations in New Hampshire, one in Maine, one in Massachusetts, and one in Pennsylvania. We are registered to do business in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

Among the areas of expertise available are department assessments, organizational studies, personnel recruitment, personnel administration, collective bargaining, community and economic development, budget/finance, and general management. MRI has a particularly strong public safety group with nationally recognized expertise in police, fire, and emergency services.

We want to help solve problems and provide solutions for future success. We do not assess blame; rather, we simply work to gain an understanding of past events in order to build a framework for future success. We do not put forth idealistic, unachievable, or narrowly focused solutions.

Our objectives are:

- To help agencies obtain maximum value for limited tax dollars.
- To identify and help communities manage the risks associated with public safety functions.
- To raise public awareness of the value and professionalism of their public resources.

- To help local leaders develop and execute plans that best meet their community's needs, given the resources available.

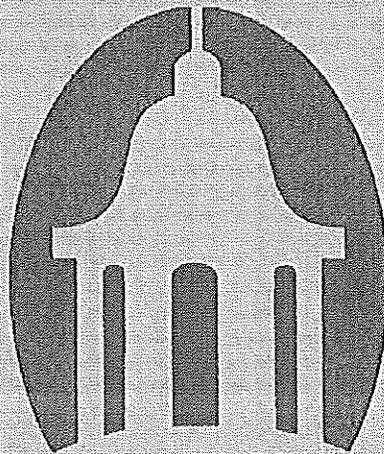
Finally, our market, focus and expertise, is New England based. We are intimately familiar with New England local government forms, culture, and issues, and pride ourselves on our ability to place our recommendations for change in a context appropriate to New England local government.

THE PROJECT TEAM

Peter J. Finley, Jr. served as Chief of the Winslow Township, NJ Fire Department, which protects a large suburban township where he was responsible for the planning, establishment, and initial deployment of the career component of the department as the community transitioned to a combination fire department. He previously served for 4 ½ years as the Chief of Department for the City of Vineland, New Jersey Fire Department, also a combination fire department where he initiated significant changes within the department including updating and modernizing equipment, providing the department's first ever formal officer training, and significantly increasing the capabilities of the regional hazardous materials response team. During his tenure, the department received more than one million dollars in various grants. He formerly commanded the Vineland Rescue Squad gaining significant EMS operations and command experience, as well as completing an overhaul of that organization's operations. Chief Finley serves as an Adjunct Professor in the Fire Science Program at Camden County College. Chief Finley received his Associate in Applied Science degree from Atlantic Community College in New Jersey, and earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Science/Administration from the University of Maryland. He is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, earning perfect scores on three of his four Applied Research Projects. He was awarded an Outstanding Research Award for his 2002 paper titled, "Residential Fire Alarm Systems: The Verification and Response Dilemma". Chief Finley holds nearly two dozen state and national certifications and is a member of a number of fire service organizations, including achieving the prestigious Chief Fire Officer designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence. He is a member of a number of fire service organizations and in November 2009 completed a two-year term as President of the New Jersey Career Fire Chiefs Association where he has been involved in the development and administration of fire service promotional examinations. From 2003-2005 he served on the Training and Education Committee of the Governor's Fire Service and Safety Task Force. He also previously served on the state committee that developed New Jersey's first Firefighter I Instructor Manual.

Richard S. O'Brien holds a BS in Fire Service Management from Granite State College/University System of New Hampshire; an AS in Fire Science from NHCTC Laconia; and a Certificate in Paramedicine from NHTI Concord. He received his Chief Fire Officer Designation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence in 2007. He is the Fire Chief in Goffstown, NH, where he is responsible for a 75-member combination department providing fire suppression, emergency medical services, haz-mat response, rescue services, fire prevention/investigation, and disaster management. Prior to his appointment in Goffstown, he served as Fire Chief in Rye, NH; served in the Derry, NH, Fire Department where he rose to the position of Battalion Chief; and was the EMS Coordinator for Elliott Hospital in Manchester, NH. Chief O'Brien has been recognized for utilizing progressive strategic planning and development approaches incorporating recognized national benchmarks in emergency (and non-emergency) services to enhance organizational effectiveness. He is especially skilled in proposal preparation and presentation and has been exceptionally successful in securing grants from various state and federal sources. His professional involvements and memberships include the International Association of Fire Chiefs; New England Association of Fire Chiefs; the National Fire Protection Association Committee on Forest and Rural Fire Protection (NFPA 1141, 1142, 1143, 1144, 1145, & 1150); the National Fire Protection Association; the International Code Council; and the National Registry of EMTs – Paramedic. Chief O'Brien joined MRI as a subject advisor in 2009 and will occasionally work on a project team.

APPENDIX A



Municipal
Resources
Inc.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER POLICY
(MODEL)

Company Name: (Provide name, address, etc. of employer)

Street Address:

Mailing Address:

Phone Number:

Contact Person:

1. ABSENCE FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Employees of (*insert name of business*) who are volunteer firefighters shall not be subject to any disciplinary action for not reporting to work at the beginning of the employee's regular working hours provided:

- A. The employee failed to report because he/she was responding to an emergency in the employee's capacity as a volunteer firefighter; and
- B. The employee reported for work as soon as was reasonably possible after being released from the emergency.

2. CHARGING OF TIME LOST

- A. Time lost by an employee who has responded to an emergency in his/her capacity as a volunteer firefighter may be charged against the employee's available leave time in accordance with the (*insert name of business*) leave time policy.
- B. If the employee does not have available time, the time may be charged against the employee's regular pay.

3. NOTIFICATION; VERIFICATION

- A. When time permits, the employee, the employee's designee or the fire department supervisor shall notify the employee's immediate supervisor or another supervisor of (*insert name of business*) that the employee has been called to an emergency and will not report to work on time.
- B. The supervisor or employer may request that the employee provide a signed statement from the chief of the volunteer fire department which shall state that the employee failed to report for work at his/her regular time because he/she was reporting to an emergency call. The statement shall also provide the time of the release from the call.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER POLICY
(Model)

The employee and employer understand that upon the employer's receipt of
An employee's volunteer firefighter status, the employer may designate the
employee essential to the employer's operations when the employee's absence
would disrupt the employer's business. The signing of this agreement
indicates the employer's approval of the employee's firefighter status.

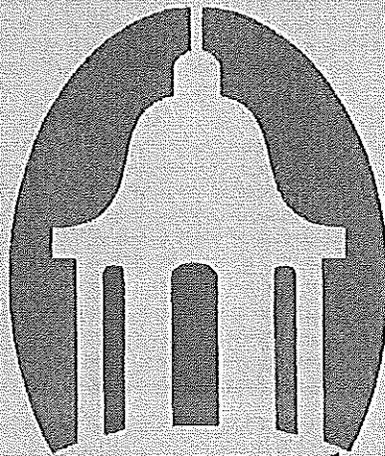
Employer Representative Signature

Employee Signature

Date: _____

Signed copy to be provided to the employee

APPENDIX B



Municipal
Resources
Inc.

Compliance Directive

Directive Number: 10-05	Effective Date: 6/20/05
	Revised: 2/2012
Subject: Fire Department	

Purpose:

This list is a guide only. It is not a complete list of all items, but includes the "key" items to comply with the Bureau of Labor Standards inspection criteria. This list is based on MRSA Title 26 and the adopted OSHA standards located in 29 CFR 1910. You should refer to these standards for a more detailed description.

Written Programs	Standard	Y	N	N/A
Respiratory Protection Program	1910.134(c)			
Confined Space *	1910.146(c)			
Hazard Communications	1910.1200(e)			
Bloodborne Pathogens/Exposure Control Plan	1910.1030(c)			
Lockout/Tag out (Maintenance on vehicles) *	1910.147(c)			
Hazard Assessment for Personal Protective Equipment	1910.132(d)			
Emergency Action Plan	1910.38(b)			
Diving Operations Manual *	12 -179 CMR*			
Required Training	Standard	Y	N	N/A
Hazard Communications (Initial)	1910.1200(h)			
Confined Space (Initial) *	1910.146(g)			
Confined Space simulated rescue (Annual) *	1910.146(k)			
Lockout/Tag out (Initial) *	1910.147(c)			
Emergency Action Plan (Initial)	1910.38(f)			
HazMat (Initial) & (Annual) - Per Level of Response	1910.120(g)			
Bloodborne Pathogens (Initial)&(Annual)	1910.1030(g)			
Fire Extinguisher (Initial)&(Annual)	1910.157(g)			
Personal Protective Equipment (Initial)	T.26 Ch.28 §2102 1 B			
Respiratory Protection (Initial)&(Annual)	1910.134(k)			
Traffic Control at Emergency Scenes (Initial)	T.26 Ch.28 §2102 1 E			
Diving Operations Training*	12-179 CMR Ch. 5			
Training Commensurate with Duties * Structural, Chainsaw, Apparatus, Driver, etc.	T.26 Ch.28 §2102 1 E			

Equipment Inspections	Standard	Y	N	N/A
Fire Extinguishers (Monthly)	1910.157(e)			
Fire Extinguishers (Annual Maintenance)	1910.157(e)			
Hose Test (Annual)	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Class "A" Fire Pump Service Test (Annual)	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Life Safety Ropes / Harness / Hardware per MFG	T26 Ch.28 §2103 9			
Ladders (Ground) (Annual)	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Ladders (Aerial) Per Mfg's Specifications	T26 Ch.6 §561			
SCBA (Call / volunteer – Monthly) (Fulltime - Weekly)	T26 Ch.28 §2105 1			
Air Compressor Relief Valve (Per mfg.)	1910.169(b)			
PPE (Turnout Gear) – (annual per NFPA)	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Breath Air Compressor – maintenance per MFG	1910.134(l)			
Diving Operations (Equipment Inspections)	12-179 CMR Ch. 5			
Records Maintained	Standard	Y	N	N/A
SCBA – weekly/monthly inspections	T26 Ch.28 §2105 1			
SCBA – flow test date (Per mfg. specs)	T26 Ch.28 §2104.3			
Respirator Medical Clearances	1910.134(m)			
Respirator Fit Test	1910.134(m)			
Cylinder Hydro-Static Test Data (SCBA & Cascade)	T26 Ch.28 §2104 3			
Individual Training/Education	T26 Ch.28 §2102 2			
Grade "D" Breathing Air	1910.134(l)			
Blood borne Pathogen (Shot Series/Waiver)	1910.1030(h)			
Pump Service Test (Mfg specs)	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Hose Test (NFPA 1962 ch3 3-1-1) (Annual)	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Ladder Inspection	T26 Ch.6 §561			
Fire Extinguisher Inspections (Monthly & Annual)	1910.157(e)			
Personal Protective Equipment Inspections	T26 Ch.6 §561			
OSHA 300 injury/illness Log	12-179 CMR Ch.6(6.9)			
Dive Records & Medical Clearance (5yr)	12-179 CMR Ch. 5			
Training Records	T.26 Ch.28 2102			
Facility Inspection	Standard	Y	N	N/A
Electrical outlets/switches – Cover plates installed	1910.305(b)			
GFCI Receptacles in wet locations and operable	1910.303(b)			
Extension Cords – Temp. use only	1910.305(a)			
Power Strips – (Not piggybacked)	1910.305(g)			
Electrical Ground Pin Attached to cords	1910.334(a)			
Electrical Branch Circuits labeled	1910.303(f)			
Electrical Box knockout covers – Properly installed	1910.305(b)			
Wiring Supported and Protected from damage	1910.305(a)			
Stairs / Treads (Conditions, railing)	1910.24			
Ladders (Condition)	1910.25 & 26			
Floor Loading Protection (Overhead storage)	1910.22(d)			
Furnace / Boiler Room (Storage – housekeeping)	1910.22(a)			
Exits: Unlocked and useable	1910.36(d)			
Exits: Signs	1910.37(b)			
Exit and Exit ways: Clear of snow and ice	1910.36(h)			
Exits: Unobstructed	1910.37(a)			
Emergency Lights, Alarms, Exit lights, Fire doors oper.	1910.37(a)			

Facility Inspection - continued	Standard	Y	N	N/A
Machine Guarding of moving parts	1910.212(a)			
Eye wash stations (Operational)	1910.151(c)			
Flammable / Combustible Storage	1910.106(d)			
General Housekeeping / Sanitation	1910.22(a)			

* If applicable

NFPA – National Fire Protection Association

* Code of Maine Rule

Compliance Directive

Directive Number: 6-03

Revised 9/2010

Effective Date: February 10, 2003

Subject: Firefighter, EMS, Law Enforcement required training interchange

Purpose: There are several training programs required by the Bureau of Labor Standards, either at the time of hire or as an annual refresher. The employer must certify that each employee has had the training and is competent.

In some instances the employee may have received this training at another facility or by another employer. This training would be acceptable for transfer from one employer to the other, if the following requirements were met:

1. The employee can provide a record of the training.
2. The employee can demonstrate competence in the subject matter.
3. The employee understands the specific employer policies and/or procedures, and site-specific hazards.
4. New employer has received proof of and accepted prior employee training, as it meets the appropriate standards, and a statement be put into the employee's training record.

*Bureau of Labor Standards required training consists of:

- Emergency Action Plan for Facility
- Hazardous Materials Awareness Level – Minimum
- Hazard Communications
- Blood borne Pathogens
- Use of Fire Extinguishers
- Training commensurate with duties the employee is expected to perform
- Personal Protective Equipment
- Respiratory Protection

*Required annual refresher:

- Hazardous Materials-Awareness, Operation, or Technician level
- Blood borne Pathogens following the employer's own written exposure control plan
- Use of Fire Extinguishers
- *Use of respirators following the employer's own written respiratory protection plan

*If the employee is expected to perform these duties.

APPENDIX C



Municipal
Resources
Inc.

Dear Chief ,

The Town of Berwick has contracted with Municipal Resources, Inc. to conduct a comprehensive, independent analysis of the Berwick Fire Department. As part of this analysis Municipal Resources is conducting a survey of communities that are similar to Berwick for the purposes of doing comparative benchmarking of fire department operations. Your town has been selected as one that we feel is comparable to Berwick.

I am respectfully asking that you take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey for me and return it to Municipal Resources as soon as possible. Your assistance will be very beneficial to this analysis of my department. The completed survey can be returned either electronically to pfinley@municipalresources.com, or, by mail to:

Peter J. Finley, Jr.
3340 Siena Way
Vineland, New Jersey 08361

If you would like a copy of the completed survey results once they are tabulated please let us know. I will be happy to provide you with a copy.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to assist me with this important endeavor. It is appreciated. If you have any questions, or, require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact either myself, or, Mr. Finley. Mr. Finley can be contacted either through the e-mail address listed above, or, by cell phone at 609-501-9835.

Yours truly,

Dennis Plante
Fire Chief

BERWICK, MAINE FIRE DEPARTMENT

COMPARABLE FIRE DEPARTMENT BENCHMARKING

DEPARTMENT NAME:

NAME/RANK OF PERSON COMPLETING SURVEY:

DATE:

CONTACT PHONE NUMBER:

COMMUNITY POPULATION:

SQUARE MILES:

TYPE OF FIRE DEPARTMENT:

NUMBER OF STATIONS:

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAREER FIREFIGHTERS:

CAREER FIRE CHIEF?:

TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEER/CALL PERSONNEL:

ISO RATING:

FISCAL 2012 TOTAL COMMUNITY BUDGET:

FISCAL YEAR 2012 TOTAL FIRE/EMS BUDGET(S):

TOTAL ADDITIONAL FIRE/EMS RELATED EXPENDITURES NOT INCLUDED IN FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET (SUCH AS FUEL, HEATING COSTS, INSURANCE, ETC.):

DOES YOUR DEPARTMENT PROVIDE EMS?:

WHAT LEVEL?:

IF YOU DO NOT PROVIDE EMS, WHO IS THE PRIMARY EMS PROVIDER?:

NUMBER OF CAREER EMS PERSONNEL:

VOLUNTEER EMS PERSONNEL:

TOTAL FIRE CALLS - 2011:

TOTAL FIRE DOLLAR LOSS - 2011:

TOTAL NFIRS BUILDING FIRES - 2011:

TOTAL EMS CALLS - 2011:

TOTAL EMERGENCY INCIDENTS - 2011:

AVERAGE ON SCENE RESPONSE TIME (FIRST UNIT) FOR EMERGENCY INCIDENTS - 2011:

OF PUMPERS:

OF LADDERS/QUINTS:

OF RESCUES (NON EMS):

OF TENDERS:

OF BRUSH UNITS:

AMBULANCES:

OF OTHER UNITS:

OF COMMAND/STAFF VEHICLES:

DO YOU HAVE MINIMUM STAFFING ON YOUR FIRE UNITS?:

IF SO, WHAT?:

HOW MANY EMS UNITS DO YOU (YOUR COMMUNITY) NORMALLY STAFF?:

HOW IS YOUR DISPATCH CENTER STAFFED? (FIRE, POLICE, CIVILIAN, REGIONAL):

TOTAL EMS REVENUE -- 2011:

REVENUE PER EMS CALL:

EMS BILLING COLLECTION RATE (%):

EMS BILLING RATE (MEDICARE PLUS?):

WHAT IS THE SQUARE FOOTAGE OF YOUR FIRE HEADQUARTERS/CENTRAL/MAIN FIRE STATION?:

DOES YOUR DEPARTMENT PROVIDE FIRST RESPONDER (RESPONSE WITH A FIRE UNIT) EMS SERVICE?:

IF THE ANSWER TO THE ABOVE QUESTION IS YES, WHAT TYPES OF CALL DO YOU RESPOND TO (I.E.: ALL CALLS, ONLY LIFE THREAT CALLS, ETC.)?:

DO YOU HAVE MANDATORY DUTY CREWS AND/OR IN STATION TIME FOR YOUR ON CALL/VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL?:

WHAT IS YOUR PAY RATE/SCALE FOR YOUR ON CALL PERSONNEL?:

HOW OFTEN DO YOUR ON CALL/VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL TRAIN?:

HOW ARE YOUR ON CALL/VOLUNTEER OFFICERS SELECTED/PROMOTED?:

HOW MANY INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL OCCUPANCIES ARE LOCATED IN YOUR TOWN?:

HOW MANY INDUSTRIAL/COMMERCIAL FIRE PREVENTION INSPECTIONS DO YOU PERFORM?:

DO YOU HAVE A PRE-FIRE PLANNING PROGRAM?:

TOTAL EQUALIZED VALUATION?:

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/COMMENTS/CLARIFICATIONS: