
**PROGRESS REVIEW OF THE
FIRE DEPARTMENT**

for the
City of Round Rock

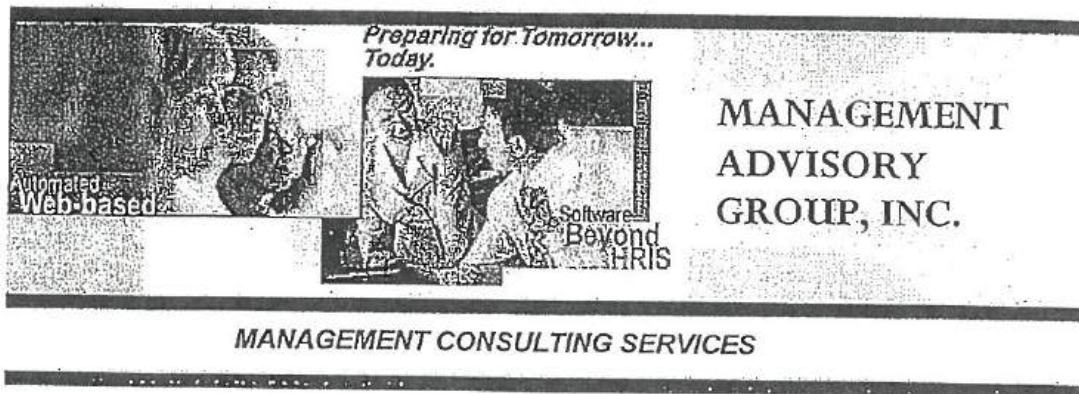


July 5, 2010

By:

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July 5, 2010

Mr. Jim Nuse
City Manager
City of Round Rock
221 E. Main Street
Round Rock, Texas 78664

Dear Mr. Nuse:

Management Advisory Group, Inc. (MAG) is pleased to provide the enclosed report to the City of Round Rock in reference to a Progress Review of the Fire Department.

This five year review of progress since the original 2005 MAG study evaluates the current and future status of all of the recommendations made during the 2005 study.

Chief Neville and I have had a cooperative relationship with all parties in this review and have developed helpful recommendations for your consideration. Interviews with all parties have remained confidential. Therefore, findings and conclusions are a function of the entire data gathering and interviewing effort.

We appreciate this opportunity to be of service to the City of Round Rock., and look forward to discussing the report at an upcoming Council meeting.

Sincerely,

Donald C. Long, Ph.D.
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Lake Ridge, Virginia 22192
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PROGRESS REVIEW for RRFD RESOURCE ALLOCATION STUDY

This Progress Review specifically reviews the status of all of the 2005 report recommendations and the extent to which MAG's original report recommendations have been implemented, modified, or not addressed. All of the 2005 report recommendations are identified within 41 separate categories of operations, services, and activities of the Fire Department. The report is organized such that each of the 41 separate categories includes a description of the current status, the factors influencing its implementation, and the future status or recommendation.

In addition to the review of the status and progress of the Department on the original report recommendations, MAG would like to offer some observations on certain aspects of the department's operations, experiences, and internal relationships.

- ✓ Overall, from a high level perspective, how is the department running and operating;
- ✓ Positive departmental changes in the last several years;
- ✓ Strengths and weaknesses of the management structure;
- ✓ Observations on the relationship between union and management; and,
- ✓ What can be done to help improve the union-management relationship?

Overall Observation of the Department's Operations

Overall, relative to 2005, the operations of the RRFD appear to be more professional and focused on the primary functions of the fire department of a growing City. There have been advances in the amount and type of resources applied to department operations, improvements in various functional areas, and a more consistent approach to operations. The Department has changed overall from an essentially "laid-back" work place to one that is much more cognizant of workplace safety, individual and team responsibility levels, and of the need to document activity. Further, the Department has improved its Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating.

The management – union relationship has deteriorated over the last several years to the point of a vote of no confidence in the Department's management team. While the internal relationships and interactions are far less positive than desired, MAG does not believe those matters have had an adverse effect on the ability of the Department to control emergency situations.

MAG does believe there is need to improve the Department's capacity to deal with larger more complex events such as the La Frontera fire. While, in MAG's view, the Department's performance at the La Frontera fire was troubling (addressed by MAG in a separate report on this incident), MAG does not believe the issues which arose there were connected to the poor management – union relationship, but rather to a failure on the part of both Department management and rank and file to recognize that the City's changing structural environment required an altered perception of their fire protection challenge (i.e., from a largely suburban to a more urban milieu).

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

The external relationship with Williamson County EMS also requires attention. Communication with another fire agency in Williamson County leads MAG to believe that issues concerning RRFD Administration relating to WCEMS are not limited to WCEMS disagreements with the RRFD. The concerns of RRFD relating to joint emergency operations with WCEMS are of such a serious nature that MAG urges immediate attention by City administration.

Positive Departmental Changes the Last Several Years

Specific positive changes since MAG's initial review of RRFD's resource allocation and the resulting recommendations include:

- 1) Development, implementation and achievement of several recommended service level goals providing guidance to both Department rank and file and Management;
- 2) Improvement in response times, to some extent the result of additional and relocated fire stations providing improved level of service to the public;
- 3) New fire and life safety inspection guidelines are being met, making Round Rock a safer place to live, work and play, and a less hazardous environment for fire fighters;
- 4) Fire hydrant inspection and testing guidelines have been developed and are being achieved again improving the level of service provided by the Department as well as improving fire fighter safety;
- 5) Training guidelines have been upgraded and are being achieved, and the Training Staff has been enhanced resulting in a more skilled Department and increasing fire fighter safety;
- 6) Public education recommendations are being met, improving life safety for those most at risk;
- 7) A funded apparatus and equipment replacement program has been established which will result in apparatus with the most advanced capabilities, and again increasing fire fighter safety;
- 8) An EMS incident peer review program has been established thereby ensuring that the high level of first responder medical care by the RRFD is maintained;
- 9) Several RRFD personnel have received advanced life support training which when fully implemented will significantly enhance the City's emergency medical service;
- 10) RRFD personnel are now involved in fire station design which will result in more efficient and effective RRFD facilities;
- 11) Fire Department staffing has improved to meet the expanding challenges facing the Department;

- 12) The RRFD organizational structure has been improved resulting in a staff more appropriate for the challenges facing the Department;
- 13) Supervision of the special operations teams (i.e., hazardous materials, special rescue, water rescue, etc.) has been upgraded, improving fire fighter safety in carrying out the critical functions of those units;
- 14) Certain extra-curricular functions formally carried out by the Department have been discontinued or modified to restrict distractions from critical operations;

Management Structure and Union Relationships

Quite soon after the original MAG report, an experienced new Fire Chief was hired by the City. Each manager has a different style that he/she brings to a job, and this Chief is no different. Any manager entering a new organization encounters a particular culture and a history of internal relationships that may be different from their own set of experiences. If the experiences are sufficiently dissimilar, conflict can result. If the new management has different views than the existing staff of how the department should operate, and neither side is willing to move along the continuum of conflict towards the other side, ongoing conflict will be the result.

In MAG's view, the rapid strides taken to improve the Department's capabilities have had the effect of changing the culture of the organization. Five years ago, MAG observed a somewhat "laid-back" organization with essentially laissez-faire management. The current culture appears to be far more structured with a much more "hands-on" approach to management. The level of detail of management review appears to be rejected by union leadership and others within the Department. The management orientation of being involved at a significant level of detail (forcing documentation and strict adherence to rules and policies) is deemed as a necessary approach to controlling a work environment that historically has had demonstrated limited initiative.

The union and management vision of where the Department should be heading and how it should be operated is markedly at odds.

The union appears to promote the view that the Department should function as seven different stations, each with their own challenges and needs. The union's view, as documented by their leadership, is that each station should be allowed to function independently, i.e., to equip and manage itself to meet the specific needs of the district for which they have been made primarily responsible. This, essentially, was the model previously used by the Department.

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

The management team, on the other hand, sees the fire suppression and rescue division of the Department as a single system made up of several elements (companies / units), with each element contributing to the whole of the City's fire protection and emergency medical system. To this end, the stations should function as similarly as possible with similar equipment and operational procedures.

MAG believes that the City of Round Rock has outgrown the independent station model, which can work adequately in a community made up largely of single family dwellings and small commercial buildings. The recent La Frontera fire illustrated the need to bring all resources of the community (and perhaps even more) together to function as a single organization.

While the Department management has done an admirable job in acquiring the needed resources and advancing training to meet the changing Department challenges, they have not "brought the rank and file along" in those transitions from a small town fire agency to urban city fire department. Management and rank and file are NOT functioning as a team pulling in the same direction. Rather, they are at constant odds, each looking to convince the Manager, the Council, and the public that "they are right".

Bringing these two factions into sync will not be an easy or short term effort. The City has contracted with a facilitator over the last two years to attempt to bridge the gap of conflict, however, it obviously has met with limited success. Engaging in facilitated sessions can have positive outcomes. However, until there is willingness on the part of both sides to work as a team, acknowledge differences, and move towards the center of the continuum of conflict, there can be no real progress. There is no real trust at this time such that productive understanding can result, with a prognosis that conflict will continue and time will continue to be wasted on inter-departmental conflict. As such conflict broadens to the general public, it can affect the public's perception of their general safety and quality of emergency services.

The decentralized nature of a fire department (many stations on different shifts) creates communications difficulties. Information can be easily distorted and influenced by union leadership. The accuracy of shared information within the Department is impacted by the manner in which it is distributed. The union has nothing to lose by being highly critical of the Fire Chief, and its leaders gain power as a Chief loses power. The management team's natural response has been to focus on rules, policies, and regulations to the point where middle management (Battalion Chiefs and Captains) have, at least in their view, difficulty managing. Rank and file personnel conclude they are being punished or singled out for minor infractions. Excessive non-productive time is spent with organizational posturing. Downward and upward communications are distorted, insufficient, and untimely.

What can be done to help improve the union-management relationship?

As noted, MAG believes that there is limited potential to improve the union-management relationship until there is an acknowledgment by both sides of the need to work as a team towards the same common set of goals. This cannot be done overnight since the relationship has been so damaged. Facilitated sessions have not been successful and will not be successful until each side moves toward the center of the continuum of conflict.

A change in the incumbency of the Fire Chief position and/or the Assistant Fire Chief position would have only limited, short-term impact. Likewise, a change in the union leadership incumbents would have only limited, short-term impact.

There are various techniques that can be employed. The method we propose is simply to focus on limited subjects to be addressed jointly by rank and file, Department management, and City Administration. This would involve sitting down at the table (CM office) with the City Manager, Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, union leadership, and a member of the business community (appointed by Council) to discuss specific issues. Minutes of the meetings should be taken, and their outcome communicated directly to Department members through official means (newsletter, CM email, or other). City Administration would be the final decision maker. The City may choose to have neutral outside technical assistance to provide advice and independent observation. A meeting agenda should be prepared for each meeting and any preliminary documentation provided to attendees several days in advance. Meetings should be limited to two hours maximum. Specific agenda items should be established. Meetings should be held every two weeks for six (6) months. Then, the process should be evaluated for ongoing need.

Suggested subjects (not necessarily in chronological order) for the meetings include:

- 1) Fire fighter safety
- 2) Incident management
- 3) Disciplinary procedures
- 4) Equipment inventory
- 5) Training procedures
- 6) Response assignments
- 7) Officer responsibilities
- 8) Driver responsibilities
- 9) WCEMS inter-action
- 10) Vacation/Holiday selection

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

Review of 2005 MAG Report Recommendations

The Round Rock Fire Department has made great gains in both meeting the recommendations of the Management Advisory Group and in improving the capabilities and efficiencies of the Department in general. Areas of concern are noted as well.

1. Expand Membership of the Advisory Group

MAG recommended that the "Advisory Group" should be expanded to include a broader representation of the commercial/industrial sector and property developers. This recommendation was originally intended to provide for input to City staff in the development of a strategic RRFD resource deployment plan.

1.1 Current Status:

The Advisory Group was disbanded by the City in 2006 via two letters thanking participants for their involvement and participation.

1.2 Factors:

To establish and maintain an advisory group requires staff time and involvement. Most agencies use the budgetary process as a mechanism to receive citizen feedback. Maintaining an advisory group is viewed as a "nice to have" program that is not essential to operations.

1.3 Future Status:

MAG believes that continued input would be valuable on other aspects of RRFD operations. The City should reserve the option for broader representation when greater community involvement in policy determinations is desired. Based on communications from outside agencies, it seems possible that the City may well be faced with some significant decisions regarding emergency medical service.

2. Service Guidelines

MAG recommended that the City and Fire Department Administration should present service level guidelines to the Advisory Group as a subject to be discussed, evaluated, and then recommended to the City Manager and City Council for possible adoption.

2.1 Current Status:

Service guidelines have been blended into the 10 year plan as generally recognized by officials within the City. There has been discussion and presentation of service level guidelines, although no formal adoption of service level guidelines has occurred by the City Council.

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

Specific areas include:

- 2.1.1 Dispatch Times (within one (1) minute of call receipt at the PSAP, all units to be dispatched to an alarm of a structure fire shall be notified for 90% of all structure fire alarms): Generally being met.
- 2.1.2 Structure Fire Response: Generally is being met, at the 78% level rather than the guideline of 80%. The Department indicates that if Chaparral Drive is connected to Oak Hollow Drive (Oak Hollow subdivision), response time goals would be met..
- 2.1.3 EMS Incident Response: This guideline, to arrive at the incident 90% of the time within 6 minutes from time of alarm receipt (at the PSAP), is not being met. The Fire Department indicates that some relocation of WCEMS units would enable accomplishment of this goal.
- 2.1.4 Fire and Life Safety Inspections: While the guidelines have not been submitted for approval, the Department indicates that the guidelines are being met.
- 2.1.5 Fire Hydrant Inspection and Testing: The Department SOP's document the guidelines and the Department indicates that the guidelines recommended in 2005 are being met.
- 2.1.6 Fire Personnel Training: The amount of fire personnel training is meeting the 2005 report guidelines and exceeding the state of Texas requirements.
- 2.1.7 Public Education: While the guidelines are not approved, the Department indicates that the 2005 report guidelines are being met.
- 2.1.8 Built In Fire Protection Systems: The Department indicates that requirements are being enforced and there is good cooperation from the commercial property owners.

2.2 Factors:

The public discussion of service level guidelines as completed through the budget process and public meetings essentially achieves the objectives of this 2005 recommendation. The integration of the service level guidelines within the 10 year plan is a common and generally accepted practice by fire departments.

2.3 Future Status:

MAG believes that the service level guidelines within the 10 year Department plan should be continuously monitored. Of particular focus should be an immediate interest in identifying actions that will enable the City to achieve the EMS incident response guidelines recommended in the 2005 report. This will require a high level of cooperation from and with Williamson County EMS.

3. Fire Service Goals and Objectives

MAG recommended the development and consideration by Council, of RRFD goals and objectives.

3.1 Current Status:

Goals and objectives have been blended into the 10 year plan as generally recognized by officials within the City. There has been discussion and presentation of goals and objectives through the annual budget process, in which the annual budget is formally adopted by the City Council. In 2005/06, discussions between Fire Administration and the Round Rock Association of Fire Fighters resulted in an agreement to pursue a 10 year plan that was approved by the City, the Local Fire Fighters Association and the International Association of Fire Fighters with the exception that the Associations asked for constant staffing levels of 4 per company and aids/adjutants for the shift commanders. The Department decided to achieve an ISO Class 1 organization by 2016. The ten (10) major goals, in order of priority, are:

- 3.1.1 To acquire property and construct a fire training facility.
- 3.1.2 To acquire the property for the construction of two new fire stations to serve northeast Round Rock.
- 3.1.3 To maintain the apparatus replacement program.
- 3.1.4 To establish Priority Medical Dispatching
- 3.1.5 To staff each fire operations position from Captain down through Fire Fighter with 4.5 firefighters.
- 3.1.6 To establish a formal written agreement with Williamson County for the provision of ambulance services and for the relocation of WCEMS resources from City fire stations.
- 3.1.7 To add an Engine company at station 3.
- 3.1.8 To add and staff a third Rescue.
- 3.1.9 To deliver fire safety education classes to Round Rock schools; complete annual business and hydrant inspections and pump and hose tests.
- 3.1.10 To relocate station #5 to the vicinity of Woods and Sam Bass Road.

3.2 Factors:

- 3.2.1 The public discussion of goals and objectives as completed through the budget process and public meetings essentially achieves the objectives of this 2005 recommendation.
- 3.2.2 Discussions with Williamson County Emergency Medical Services officials lead MAG to conclude that there is NOT a high level of interest by that Agency in any timely

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

movement of ambulances from Round Rock Fire Stations.

3.3 Future Status:

3.3.1 MAG believes that the goals and objectives within the 10 year Department plan should be continuously monitored.

3.3.2 In order to achieve those EMS response time goals, MAG believes that City management should initiate discussions with their peers in Williamson County Government.

4. RRFD Dispatch

MAG recommended the initiation of a project to improve RRFD dispatch operations. The following were the points covered

- A) Improvement in the automatic vehicle locator (AVL) system*
- B) Increased staffing of Dispatch Center*
- C) Establishment of a RRFD "Command and Control Center"*
- D) Establishment of a City Emergency Operations Center*
- E) Integration of RRFD and CAD system data*
- F) Provision of mobile computer terminals for reserve apparatus*

4.1 Current Status:

- 4.1.1 There is no apparent effort to further develop the automatic vehicle locator (AVL) system.
- 4.1.2 There is no movement toward, or sense of need for a RRFD "Command and Control Center".
- 4.1.3 There are facilities established for a City Emergency Operations Center (EOC) but its conditions of use seem vague.
- 4.1.4 There is no movement toward further integration of Fire and Police Departments CAD data.
- 4.1.5 All RRFD apparatus are now equipped with mobile computer terminals.

4.2 Factors

- 4.2.1 The Police Department Communications Manager did not indicate any need for additional staffing for the Dispatch Center.
- 4.2.2 The Fire Chief believes the current use of the RRFD Headquarters station as a Department Command and Control Center is adequate.
- 4.2.3 The Fire Chief believes the RRPD would oppose any further integration of Fire and Police CAD data.

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

- 4.2.4 RRFD response times are, in general, in concert with national levels.
- 4.2.5 Further development of the AVL system would improve those times but given the adequacy of current response times the lack of interest in this expense is understandable.

4.3 Future Status:

- 4.3. In MAG's opinion the AVL issue should be shelved until the next significant upgrade in the RRFD dispatch system.
- 4.3.2 Given the continuing issue of a dedicated RRFD dispatch position, a more detailed study of this situation should be undertaken by a joint Fire / Police committee to determine if additional staffing for the Dispatch Center is warranted.
- 4.3.3 While RRFD Administration does not agree with the need for a Department Command and Control Center, MAG believes that issues developed during the review of the La Frontera fire relating to use of recalled personnel, support such an effort.
- 4.3.4 MAG believes that further study as to the utilization of the EOC should be initiated. Specifically, use of the facility as a Command and Control Center for the RRFD should be investigated. Further, the City of Round Rock should exercise the EOC on a regular pre-planned basis using scenarios developed to exercise "unified command" involving City agencies beyond Fire and Police (e.g., Public Works, Administration, Parks and Recreation, etc.).
- 4.3.5 MAG believes that a joint Police / Fire study should be undertaken to determine what data in each Department's files, if any, would be useful to the other.

5. Emergency Medical Service

MAG made several recommendations regarding emergency medical service (EMS). The following were the points covered:

- A) *Establishment of a written contract with Williamson County regarding provision of EMS within the City of Round Rock covering mutual obligations of Williamson County EMS and RRFD*
- B) *Upgrade of EMS software*
- C) *Establishment of "Medical Priority Dispatch criteria of Life Threatening Emergencies, Time Critical Emergencies"*
- D) *Designation of an EMS Coordinator position*
- E) *Establishment of an intra-Department EMS Advisory Committee*
- F) *Establishment of an EMS QZ/CQI Peer Review Process*

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

G) *Establishment of RRFD Medical Director*

H) *Establishment of coordinated WCEMS and RRFD dispatch system*

I) *Expansion of the "Public Access AED Program" and citizen CPR training opportunities*

J) *Adoption of an alternate EMS delivery system, e.g.:*

- *ALS Engine Companies*
- *ALS Rescue Squads*
- *ALS Rescue Ambulances*

5.1 Current Status

5.1.1 Round Rock Dispatch has not completed EMS priority dispatch

5.1.2 The position of EMS coordinator has been established

5.1.3 There have been numerous meetings involving WCEMS and RRFD personnel as well as representatives of other County fire agencies.

5.1.3 It seems clear to MAG that the WCWMS and RRFD Dispatch Centers have yet to achieve a desirable level of coordination

5.1.4 The RRFD has created an EMS peer review process

5.1.5 The RRFD has obtained the services of a Medical Director

5.1.6 The "AED Public Access Program" has been expanded.

5.2 Factors

5.2.1 Current agreements between Williamson County EMS (WCEMS) and the RRFD have not satisfied the concern of either the RRFD (or other County fire agencies) regarding command and control of incidents involving resources of both agencies.

5.2.2 There appears to be some resistance on the part of the WCEMS to fully participate in unified command at EMS incidents. The reason(s) for this continuing intra-agency friction is unclear. In some cases County officials have contacted Round Rock and other City officials complaining of fire officials efforts to effect coordination and cooperation.

5.2.3 Certain examples of this lack of coordinated effort make it clear to MAG that continued lack of coordination at EMS incidents will lead to undesirable and perhaps dangerous consequences.

5.2.4. Although several RRFD personnel have been trained to paramedic levels, their effectiveness seems limited due to an apparent lack of enthusiasm for the program on the part of WCEMS and the difficulty in obtaining training for personnel.

5.3 Future Status

5.3.1 Essentially, significantly improving the level of emergency medical service afforded

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

the population of Round Rock is dependant on improved cooperation and coordination between Williamson County Emergency Medical Services and the RRFD. In MAG's opinion, it seems doubtful that this goal can be reached without the involvement of City and County Administration.

- 5.3.2 One item which could improve the delivery of emergency medical service to the Round Rock population without said intra-agency improvement is the completion of the priority EMS dispatch program.

6. Fire Station Design / Location

MAG made several recommendations regarding fire station cost control, fire station design and fire station location, specifically:

- A) *Consider the use of movable, metal construction for interim fire station construction*
- B) *Involvement of RRFD Administration and staff in fire station design and location*
- C) *Utilization of computer assisted map analysis for locating stations.*

6.1 Current Status

- 6.1.1 MAG has been advised that RRFD personnel are now involved in locating and designing fire stations.
- 6.1.2 MAG has been advised that CAD analysis is now used in determining new fire station locations.

6.2 Factors:

A high level of coordination and agreement appears to have been reached on this recommendation.

6.3 Future Status

In MAG's opinion this recommendation has been satisfied.

7. Capital Set Aside Program

MAG recommended the establishment of a capital set-aside program for projected fire facility construction, equipment and apparatus necessary to place the station in service and for replacement of existing fire apparatus and equipment.

7.1 Current Status:

- 7.1.1 A capital set aside for future station construction has not been established.
- 7.1.2 The City has established a funded apparatus replacement program. In 2009 the City set up a specific capital funding program to replace fire apparatus on a 10 year schedule for Engines, 15 years for Trucks & Quints, a 5 year chassis and 10 year box

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

replacement for Rescues and a 20 year replacement for Tenders and Brush Rigs.

7.2 Factors:

7.2.1 The factors of time and money are obviously important considerations for any capital program. If the City knows that certain stations will be needed in a particular area, as much advance planning and funding as possible is desirable. Typically, land costs for stations escalate as time proceeds.

7.2.2 Funding availability also dictates the aggressiveness of the apparatus and equipment replacement program.

7.3 Future Status:

7.3.1 MAG continues to endorse the establishment of a capital set-aside program for projected fire facility construction, equipment and apparatus necessary to place the station in service and for replacement of existing fire apparatus and equipment.

7.3.2 MAG believes the current apparatus replacement program could be modified (extend time horizon for certain apparatus) should funding be an issue. This would be especially if the use of Rescue Squad apparatus is extended as the wear on the heavy apparatus would be reduced.

8. RRFD Accreditation

MAG recommended consideration of accreditation.

8.1 Current Status:

8.1.1 RRFD, after consideration, has noted in its 10 year plan that it would not pursue accreditation.

8.2 Factors:

8.2.1 It is MAG's observation that most fire service agencies who have sought this confirmation have done so to shore up a public perception in order to justify additional resources

8.2.2 The attainment of accreditation does NOT ensure more effective or efficient fire protection or emergency medical services

8.2.3 The accreditation process places an extraordinary burden on existing staff time, and the FD does not have sufficient staff to dedicate to the accreditation process

8.2.4 Seeking accreditation is a time consuming process.

8.3 Future Status:

The Department should retain its 2009 decision not to pursue accreditation.

9. RRFD Quality Assurance

MAG recommended establishment of a performance feedback for all significant incidents, including EMS where RRFD personnel assisted in patient care

9.1 Current Status:

- 9.1.1 Based on La Frontera fire interviews, there is a minimum of feedback solicited from personnel regarding major incidents.
- 9.1.2 There is no evidence of a formal feedback system for "clients" experiencing the services of the Department

9.2 Factors:

- 9.2.1 Often, a Department's labor representatives seek to create unrest in labor relations matters.
- 9.2.2 A significant number of Department personnel have a very negative view of the RRFD performance at the La Frontera fire and believe they were inhibited by Department Administration from expressing their concerns.
- 9.2.3 A significant number of personnel do not hold the Department Administration in high regard concerning the management of the La Frontera fire or in establishing leadership for emergency operations in general
- 9.2.4 Review of the La Frontera fire seems to indicate a lack of preparation for larger and/or more complex incidents by RRFD personnel of several (if not all) ranks.

9.3 Future Status:

- 9.3.1 City Administration should, in concert with RRFD Administration and labor representatives, undertake an investigation to determine causes for apparent lack of preparation for larger, more complex emergency incidents.
- 9.3.2 City Administration should, in concert with RRFD Administration and labor representatives, address the issues surfacing from that effort.

10. RRFD Staffing

MAG recommended several staffing and deployment alternatives.

10.1 Current Status

- 10.1.1 Currently, Engine company officers on one of the three shifts are Captains while on the other two shifts they hold the rank of Lieutenant. The arrangement results these Lieutenants having a split chain of command. In some matters they report to the Captain of their assigned station, (e.g., station maintenance, hydrant inspection, etc.),

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

while for day to day operational issues (emergency response, training, etc.) they report to their Shift Commander.

10.1.2 RRFD Administration followed MAG's recommendation in appointing an officer in command of the Rescue Squads.

10.2 *Factors:*

10.2.1 A split chain of command can easily lead to conflict and frustration.

10.3 *Future Status*

10.3.1 MAG recommends either upgrading of all Engine Lieutenants to Captain or reducing the Engine Captain's position to Lieutenants.

10.3.2 MAG recommends continuing the practice of having Lieutenants assigned to the Rescue Squads.

11. Vacation Scheduling and Holiday Leave

MAG recommended that emergency responder vacation and holiday leave be scheduled on an even basis throughout the year in order to reduce overtime costs. MAG further recommended that all earned vacation should be scheduled each year and in those cases vacation is not used, it should be "cashed out" at straight time rates.

11.1 *Current Status*

11.1.1 RRFD Administration has attempted to use a "Constant Staffing with Staffing Pool and Overtime" model to staff the City Fire stations with an adequate number of personnel on a 24/7-365 day basis.

11.1.1.1 Essentially, this model is designed to fill scheduled leaves (earned vacation and holiday time) with personnel assigned to the staffing pool. Unscheduled leaves are filled by hiring back other personnel on a compensated overtime basis.

11.1.1.2 Because the Department's labor agreements do not allow the even distribution of vacation leave throughout the year, this system can not function as designed as it is impossible to project when vacation and holiday leave will be taken.

11.1.1.3 The result of uneven vacation/holiday leave use is greater overtime expense and additional personnel for the staffing pool than would be the case if such leaves were evenly distributed throughout the year.

11.1.1.4 A secondary disadvantage is uneven staffing levels wherein in some situations more personnel are staffing the Engine and Truck companies that are

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

deemed necessary.

11.2 Factors:

11.2.1 Modifying vacation selection practices to result in even distribution throughout the year would benefit the City through reduced overtime costs and staffing pool costs.

11.2.2 Because fire fighting and rescue is, in the extreme, a team effort, staffing variances can result in less efficient, effective and safe operations when operating with personnel less familiar with the apparatus, district hazards, etc.

11.3 Future Status

11.3.1 MAG recommends the City reach agreement with RRFD rank and file to implement a vacation selection system which would distribute vacation/holiday leaves evenly throughout the year.

12. Use of Staffing Pool

MAG recommended the use of a staffing pool to fill scheduled vacancies.

12.1 Current Status:

See 11.1

12.2 **Factors:** Modifying vacation selection practices to result in even distribution throughout the year would benefit the City through reduced overtime costs and staffing pool costs.

12.3 Future Status:

The Department should continue to employ the "Constant Staffing with Pool and Overtime" approach but modify the vacation/holiday leave selection process to result in evenly distributed vacation/holiday leave throughout the year .

13. Overtime Budget

MAG recommended the inclusion of an overtime fund to maintain an appropriate staffing level when multiple companies are detailed out of the City for training exercises.

13.1 Current Status:

The Department indicates that sufficient overtime funding is budgeted each year to augment the Training staff but overtime is NOT used to staff stations vacated for out of City training.

13.2 Factors:

13.2.1 The lack of an appropriate training facility within the City requires the Department to use facilities in other communities as available. This necessarily vacates some stations

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

for extended periods of time.

13.2.2 The recommended budgeting approach would enable the RRFD to maintain more adequate staffing for protection of the City.

13.3 *Future Status:*

The City should fund sufficient overtime to support multi-company out-of-City training pending construction of an adequate facility within the City.

14. Battalion Adjutant Position

MAG recommended establishment of a Battalion Adjutant position.

14.1 *Current Status:*

14.1.1 The Fire Department has indicated in the 10 year plan that "this position was not established, but with the amount of personnel dispatched to a commercial structure fire, there are adequate personnel on scene for the incident commander to select an Aide".

14.1.2 Further, "due to the Battalion Chief's current workload, the department does not staff a battalion aide position; however, the response matrix for a *heavy box/structure* fire provides 18 firefighters on scene, which is one more firefighter than recommended by the IAFC & IAFF. This extra person allows the incident commander to pick the appropriate person as their aide after arrival at the scene.

14.2 *Factors:*

14.2.1 This response to the recommendation does not address the essence of the recommendation, which is designed to support excellence through consistency and in a command team at an incident.

14.2.2 The current system and approach did not hold up well in the La Frontera incident, in reference to scene management confusion and hazards, as noted in that report.

14.3 *Future Status:*

14.3.1 MAG continues to recommend establishment of a Battalion Adjutant position, reporting directly to and receiving direction from the Battalion Chief.

14.3.2 MAG recommends that the following responsibilities and authorities be considered for the Battalion Adjutant position:

14.3.2.1 Drive and perform minor maintenance on the command vehicle (similar to the duties of an operator of a heavy vehicle.

14.3.2.2 Establish, with the Battalion Chief, the basis for an Incident Management Team (IMT), assisting the Shift Commander (Battalion Chief) at emergency incidents typically performing as the ICS Planning Section Chief, but available for any task

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

assigned by the Incident Commander.

14.3.2.3 Perform those administrative tasks assigned by the Battalion Commander including (but not limited to), matters of staffing planning, report preparation, vacation approvals, and overtime hiring.

14.3.2.4 In the absence of the Battalion Chief assigned as the Battalion Commander, the Battalion Adjutant would fill the role of the Battalion Commander. The Adjutant's position should be filled by one of the Lieutenants from one of that Platoon's Companies. The Lieutenant's position should then be filled as is the case with any vacancy in that rank.

14.3.3 In MAG's view it is important not to burden the Shift Commander with administrative/clerical duties in order that he/she may observe company level training, perform personal pre-incident planning, observe company officer performance and be available for questioning by and counseling for personnel.

15. Training Facility

MAG recommended the construction of a training facility adjacent to a current or planned fire station.

15.1 Current Status:

MAG is advised that while City Administration is supportive of the need for a RRFD training facility, no steps have been taken to acquire the property necessary for such a project

15.2 Factors:

15.2.1 Values of land suitable for such a project are high.

15.2.2 The cost of building a suitable training facility is significant.

15.2.3 MAG believes that there is no reason to assume the value of such suitable property is likely to diminish in the foreseeable future.

15.2.4 MAG is advised that the City is investigating the possibility of a joint training facility with other communities.

15.3 Future Status

15.3.1 MAG believes the concept of a multi-agency training center is admirable, but cautions that the needs of the RRFD should not be down-graded in accomplishing that goal, i.e., while nearby communities may not believe a multi-story training facility is necessary, it clearly is an issue for the RRFD

15.3.2 MAG believes that while construction can reasonably be delayed until better economic conditions prevail, delay in purchase of the property will only increase the cost of

the project

16. Training Policies

MAG recommended adjustment to RRFD policies.

16.1 Current Status:

16.1.1 Documentation provided by the Department implies that a primary, if not THE PRIMARY purpose of training is performance evaluation (new SOP, no date or number)

16.1.2 Documentation provided by the Department indicates an extensive NIMS-ICS training program was conducted by Texas A&M in September of 2008.

16.1.3 RRFD SOP 132 (dated December 7, 2007) requires that all emergency response personnel hired after September 1, 2007 must be certified as apparatus operators with 11 months of employment.

16.1.4 RRFD document # 4104 requires:

16.1.4.1 All Fire Fighters become Relief Drivers within 11 months of their date of hire.

16.1.4.2 All Drivers become Acting Lieutenants within one year of their date of promotion.

16.1.4.3 All Lieutenants become Acting Captains within one year of their date of promotion.

16.1.5 RRFD document # 1212 establishes a method for conducting the training orientation and evaluation of Probationary Fire Fighters. The document requires:

16.1.5.1 Attainment of Fire Fighter II skill level within 5 weeks of employment

16.1.5.2 Two weeks of the initial Training Program shall include successful completion of the Pumper/Driver Operator curriculum

16.1.5.3 By the ninth month of employment, Probationary Fire Fighters must have achieved Relief Driver status.

16.2 Factors:

16.2.1 Prior to the current Fire Department Administration, Department training appeared to be somewhat informal.

16.2.2 Therefore it is understandable and desirable that the current Administration would tend to institute a more formal training regimen.

16.2.3 That may account for the apparent focus on training documentation and evaluation of individuals and groups.

16.2.4 Based on the La Frontera fire interviews and documentation, the NIMS-ICS training did not appear to "take" at a practical level.

16.3 Future Status:

- 16.3.1 While evaluation and documentation of training performance is important to maintaining and improving a Department's emergency operations, in MAG's view, over emphasis on formal evaluation and documentation can limit the value of training by stressing "show" rather than "go".
- 16.3.2 In MAG's experience, company level training is at least as important as training initiated and conducted by the Training Division. The value of requiring formal lesson plans for every company/station level training session can limit company officers in taking advantage of a situation to create a training opportunity, i.e., when the company goes shopping for meals or on pre-fire planning or code enforcement inspection, the officer can "invent" situations to challenge his crew. For example, *"The normal route is blocked by an accident", take me on the best alternative route"; "The standpipe FDC on this building is blocked by a parked truck, demonstrate how we could supply the standpipe"; "Ground floor access to this multi-story building is blocked by occupants' egress, how can we make entry with hose lines to the fire on the 3rd floor?", etc..* This type of training should not require the development of a formal lesson plan.
- 16.3.3 MAG recommends that a somewhat less demanding planning requirement for company level training be instituted.
- 16.3.4 MAG has concerns regarding the application of NIMS-ICS by RRFD personnel. MAG recommends greater attention to this issue for all levels of RRFD emergencies.
- 16.3.5 MAG believes that the 5 week pre-station training period is the bare minimum necessary for recruit Fire Fighters to gain the skills and awareness necessary to fulfill the role of a company member. MAG notes with concern that 40% of that period appears to be dedicated to apparatus operator training. MAG recommends such training be delayed at least until the Fire Fighter has completed his probation as a Fire Fighter.
- 16.3.6 MAG recommends more emphasis be placed on emergency scene management, particularly for larger, more complex incidents, through the use of table-top scenarios

17. Training Staff

MAG recommended the following staffing alterations for RRFD Training:

- Creation of a Battalion Chief position as the RRFD Training Officer
- Creation of a Captain as an Assistant Training Officer
- Creation of a civilian "Education Specialist"
- Deletion of the Training Lieutenants positions
- Provision of O.T. funding for training purposes

17.1 Current Status

Based on information supplied by the Department, all points covered by this recommendation have essentially been met with the exception of appointment of a civilian "Education Specialist" and the assignment of a Battalion Chief as the "Chief Training Officer".

17.2 Factors:

17.2.1 MAG is advised that according to Texas Civil Service rules the appointment of a non-uniformed "Education Specialist" can not be made.

17.2.2 MAG is advised that the assignment of a Battalion Chief as the "Chief Training Officer" has been delayed due to certain personnel issues.

17.3 Future Status

MAG believes the essence of this recommendation has been accomplished or is under way.

18. Code Enforcement Staffing

MAG made several recommendations relating to code enforcement, i.e.:

- A) Reclassification of Fire Marshal position to Battalion Chief rank.
- B) Reclassification of Fire Prevention Lieutenant position to Captain (Assistant Fire Marshal).
- C) Reclassification of Fire Prevention Driver position to Lieutenant.

18.1 Current Status:

Each of the recommended reclassifications has been accomplished.

18.2 Factors:

These changes have enhanced the ability of the Department to provide services.

18.3 Future Status:

The Department should continue with the current staffing for code enforcement.

19. Code Enforcement Objectives

MAG made several recommendations relating to code enforcement objectives for specific occupancy types

19.1 Current Status

See 2.1.4

19.2 Factors:

See 2.2

19.3 Future Status

MAG believes that the service level guidelines within the 10 year Department plan should be continuously monitored. Of particular focus should be an immediate interest in identifying actions that will enable the City to achieve the EMS incident response guidelines recommended in the 2005 report. This will require a high level of cooperation from and with Williamson County EMS.

20. Fire Inspection Manual

MAG recommended the development of a RRFD code enforcement manual.

20.1 Current Status

MAG has been advised that a significant amount of work has been accomplished on this project but it has not been released for company use at point until further development is accomplished

20.2 Factors:

This project requires a great deal of staff work.

20.3 Future Status

The Department should continue development of the document and speed its release to the stations.

21. Utilization of City Attorney's Office for Enforcement Actions

MAG recommended utilization of the City Attorney's Office for non-compliance with code requirements.

21.1 Current Status:

The Department has noted that if compliance to a written notification of non-compliance is not forthcoming within a reasonable time period, the file is forwarded to the City Attorney's Office for necessary legal action.

21.2 Factors:

This approach has enhanced the ability of the Department to provide services.

21.3 Future Status:

The Department should continue with this practice.

22. Fire and Life Safety Education Specialist

MAG recommended the hiring of a civilian Public Education Specialist with responsibilities for both the fire and life safety education and Public Information Officer roles and the transfer this responsibility from the Fire Marshal to the Administrative Chief.

22.1 Current Status:

The Department has noted that this position has not been created but has been discussed with Human Resources, Fire Department senior staff and outside legal counsel to determine if such a position could be legally created under state firefighter civil service law. This review indicated that State civil service restricts the department's ability to hire a civilian Public Education Specialist with responsibilities for both the fire and life safety education and Public Information Officer roles.

22.2 Factors:

If Texas law precludes such an assignment of duties and responsibilities to a civilian position, part of the intent of the recommendation could be accomplished (planning for life safety education) by hiring a part time consultant.

22.3 Future Status:

Consider hiring a part time consultant to assist in the planning aspects of the life safety education function.

23. RRFD Data System

MAG recommended that responsibility for the RRFD data system be transferred to the Administrative Chief and a full-time Information Technology Specialist be assigned the Department.

23.1 Current Status

MAG is advised by Department Administration that reorganization of the City Information Technology Department makes this recommendation unachievable at this point in time.

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

23.2 Factors:

- A change in City policy and organization has made this recommendation unachievable.

23.3 Future Status

MAG recommends discounting this recommendation at this time.

24. RRFD Volunteer Fire Department

MAG made several recommendations regarding the RRVFD.:

24.1 Current Status

The RRVFD has been disbanded.

24.2 Factors:

This recommendation is no longer applicable.

24.3 Future Status

This recommendation is no longer applicable.

25. ETJ Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services

MAG recommended limited responsibility for fire protection and emergency medical services for the ETJ that was (theoretically) the responsibility of the RRVFD. MAG recommended that the agreement should clearly state that no deployment of resources (station location) shall be based on providing the above emergency services to the ETJ.

25.1 Current Status:

An Emergency Services District formed in 2006 took in the City's old ETJ area. RRFD provides services for the ESD under contract from City fire stations. The revenue to the City from this contract was about \$1.2 million during 2009.

25.2 Factors:

Organizational changes have been responsive to this MAG recommendation.

25.3 Future Status:

No further comment is appropriate.

26. Reserve Training and Emergency Services

MAG recommended the assignment of certain specific emergency functions, under command of the direction and control of RRFD officers.

Current Status

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

The RRVFD has been disbanded.

Factors:

This recommendation is no longer applicable.

Future Status

This recommendation is no longer applicable.

27. RRVFD Apparatus

MAG recommended assignment of certain apparatus to the RRFD Reserve

27.1 Current Status

The RRVFD has been disbanded.

Factors:

This recommendation is no longer applicable.

Future Status

This recommendation is no longer applicable.

28. RRFD Organizational Structure

MAG made specific recommendations regarding RRFD organizational structure.

28.1 Current Status:

A number of changes have been made, particularly in reference to the upgrading of positions in Training and Code Enforcement.

28.2 Factors:

Organizational changes have been responsive to most of MAG's organizational recommendations.

28.3 Future Status:

28.3.1 See #s 10 & 14, regarding Staffing and Battalion Adjutant.

28.3.2 The organizational structure has made improvements through upgrades and reorganization of work assignments that should be maintained.

29. Special Teams

MAG recommended that Special Teams be organized, with a limited number of personnel, to carry out the following emergency operations and that prior to any equipment being purchased, a skeleton crew receive advanced training

A) Hazardous materials

B) Trench rescue

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

greater attention to this issue for all levels of RRFD emergencies.

32. NIMS Implementation

MAG recommended that use of NIMS-ICS be required for all emergency incidents.

Current Status

See 16.1

Factors:

See 16.2

Future Status

See 16.3

33. Parade duty

MAG recommended that the practice of using on-duty, front line resources for parades should be abolished.

33.1 Current Status:

RRFD has abolished the practice of using on-duty front line resources for parades, with the single exception of July 4th.

33.2 Factors:

The July 4th parade participation is mitigated by the Department's assignment of the truck at the end of the parade. If a call occurs, this makes it easier to respond than if the truck were in the middle of the parade.

33.3 Future Status:

There should be a clear plan established to ensure that fire personnel are fully aware of the exact protocols for emergency response.

34. Station Birthday Parties

MAG recommended that the practice of holding station birthday parties be modified so that hosting duties are carried out by reserve personnel rather than on-duty career personnel and at stations where activities can be safely carried out.

34.1 Current Status:

The practice of hosting station birthday parties was discontinued in 2005.

34.2 Factors:

NA

34.3 Future Status:

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

This was an excellent administrative and operational decision and should be continued.

35. Command Apparatus

MAG recommended that command apparatus be of such size and design as to allow four personnel to work in seated positions, facing a work table, with headsets and independent radios.

35.1 Current Status

The Department is using pickup trucks fitted with camper shells and rollout tables allowing a commander to stand at the rear of the vehicle facing the table.

35.2 Factors:

35.2.1 While the current command vehicle design is superior to working from the hood of a sedan is often the case with other fire departments, the design's shortcomings were apparent at the La Frontera fire where the heavy winds and environmental noise caused the Incident Commander to retreat into the cab of the vehicle where his operations were cramped by the interior size and design of the cab.

35.2.2 These conditions are not unusual at emergency incident scenes.

35.3 Future Status

MAG again recommends the design and construction of a van based vehicle of such size and design as to allow four personnel to work within the vehicle, in seated positions, facing a work table, with headsets and independent radios.

36. Assignment of command apparatus

MAG made several recommendations regarding the assignment and usage of command apparatus.

36.1 Current Status

36.1.1 The Shift Commander is assigned the command vehicle.

36.1.2 MAG is advised that a reserve command vehicle is assigned to the Headquarters Station.

36.1.3 MAG is advised that certain Headquarters staff are assigned emergency equipped vehicles which can function as relief command vehicles.

35.2 Factors:

35.2.1 The recommended vehicle would be costly in comparison to the current command vehicle.

36.2.2 The recommended vehicle would not be as comfortable to drive in a day to day situation.

Future Status

- 35.3.1 The cost of such a vehicle would be warranted after the Department's experience at the La Frontera fire.
- 35.3.2 The cost of the recommended vehicle is such that only a single relief vehicle is recommended.
- 36.3.3 Given this, the vehicles assigned other Headquarters could be down graded in both size and equipment although ideally such vehicles would be supplied to any vehicles taken home by a command officer

37. Aerial Apparatus

MAG recommended that a reserve aerial apparatus should be purchased if the RRFD continues to operate independent truck company(ies) or conversion of current aerial apparatus to a special call apparatus if the "quint/squad" concept is adopted

37.1 Current Status

- 37.1.1 MAG has been advised that the Department has opted for an unconventional concept of apparatus deployment, i.e. Engine, Truck and Quint companies staffed with a minimum of three personnel are to be deployed.
- 37.1.2 In addition to that deployment the Department has opted for a deployment of several "Rescue Squads" staffed with two personnel, the exact number as yet undetermined.
- 37.1.2 MAG is advised that soon the RRFD will have one Truck apparatus in reserve.

37.2. Factors:

- 37.2.1 As envisioned by the Department, when "built out", all but one station would have a staffed Engine company, certain stations (the number yet undetermined) would have a staffed Truck/Quint company, while Rescue Squads would be assigned to stations (the number yet undetermined). One station would have a quint apparatus deployed with or without a Rescue Squad.

37.3 Future Status

MAG's experience with Quints indicates that to be cost effective for structure fire protection they should be dispatched with at least one other Quint. The RRFD vision for apparatus deployment is not familiar to MAG. MAG continues to believe that a greater deployment of the Quint/Squad concept would provide a more effective level of both emergency medical and fire protection service at the same or lower cost.

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

38. Pumper Apparatus

MAG recommended RRFD give consideration to changing specifications for cabs in order to gain storage space and for possible economies.

38.1 Current Status

MAG is advised that future apparatus design will consider equipment storage needs.

38.2 Factors:

As the Department EMS capabilities increase (as sooner or later they will), the need for additional EMS related equipment and supplies will become critical

38.3 Future Status

MAG is convinced that current Department Administration is cognizant of the issue and will meet this recommendation.

39. Equipment Standards

MAG recommended establishment of equipment standards for Engine Companies.

39.1 Current Status

39.1.1 MAG has been advised that this has been accomplished.

39.1.2 Personnel interviews make it obvious that some personnel still believe each apparatus should be "customized" according to the assigned personnel assessment of their needs.

39.2 Factors:

It appears to MAG that certain RRFD personnel have difficulty seeing the RRFD as a whole system. Rather they appear to see the Department as individual units, similar to independent volunteer fire departments.

39.3 Future Status

MAG is convinced that Department Administration will make the appropriate decisions on this matter.

40. Rescue Tools

MAG recommended that if the Quint / Concept were adopted, all rescue tools be reassigned to the Squad apparatus.

40.1 Current Status:

The Department has indicated that every piece of major equipment has a rescue tool. The heavy rescue has all of the tools, as does Truck 1. The Squads have combination tools

Progress Review for RRFD Resource Allocation Study

(Rescue 3 has a larger set and Rescue 4 has a smaller set).

40.2 Factors:

The deployment model the Department has envisioned is not compatible with this recommendation.

40.3 Future Status:

Given the deployment model envisioned by the Department, this recommendation should be dismissed.

41. Apparatus Service Life Extension

MAG recommended less costly apparatus be used for EMS response to reduce wear and tear on heavy apparatus and extend service life.

41.1 Current Status

See # 37 regarding apparatus.

41.2 Factors:

Given the long term Department vision of apparatus deployment, MAG is less convinced that this recommendation is desirable.

41.3 Future Status

MAG recommends that the use of Rescue Squads be reconsidered once "build-out is achieved.

REPORT ON THE

La Frontera Fire

for

City of Round Rock

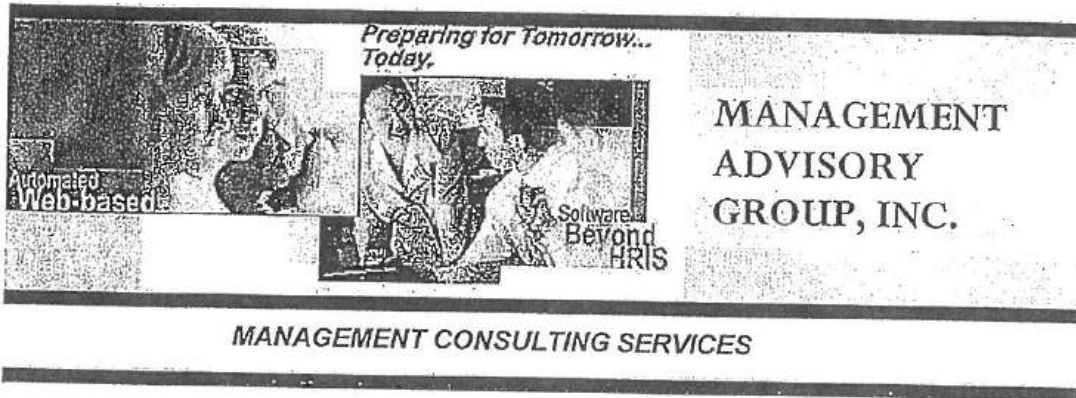


June 15, 2010

By:

MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP, INC.

4000 Genesee Place, Suite 205
Lake Ridge, Virginia 22192
(703) 590-7250



June 15, 2010

Mr. Jim Nuse
City Manager
City of Round Rock
221 E. Main Street
Round Rock, Texas 78664

Dear Mr. Nuse:

Management Advisory Group, Inc. (MAG) is pleased to provide the enclosed report to the City of Round Rock in reference to a review of the La Frontera fire incident of December 2008.

The five year review of progress since the original 2005 MAG study will be provided under separate cover. This will allow for focused analysis on the fire event and the progress review.

Chief Neville and I have had a cooperative relationship with all parties in this review and have developed helpful recommendations for your consideration. Interviews with all parties have remained confidential. Therefore, findings and conclusions are a function of the entire data gathering and interviewing effort.

We appreciate this opportunity to be of service to the City of Round Rock.

Sincerely,


Donald C. Long, Ph.D.
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Lake Ridge, Virginia 22192
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