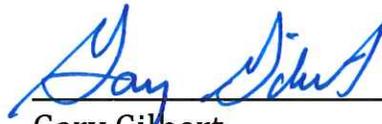


**Madera County Fire Department
Staff Report
To
Preserve and Improve
The Madera County Fire Department
With a Focus on
Volunteer/Paid Call Fire Fighters**

October 23, 2013

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Madera County Fire Department

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Introduction

The Board of Supervisors authorized this project after a small number of complaints and grievances were brought to their attention regarding the management of volunteer/PCF's within the County Fire Department (MCFD). This project is to review the procedures used in the fire department in following Board of Supervisors adopted policies and ordinances and the concerns raised in the Grand Jury Report of April 15, 2013.

The purpose of this document is to assist in the development of guidelines and policy for the management of the Madera County Fire Department. The overall goal is: **1) The Fire Chief will be given broad authority and policy direction regarding performance expectations and management of the Madera County Fire Department. 2) The performance of the Fire Chief (as an appointed Department head) shall be annually evaluated on the effective execution of the directives received from the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Officer. 3) The Fire Chief and all employees need to embrace a culture of encouragement and appreciation of the efforts of our combination fire department; including volunteer/paid call fire fighters and staff. 4) The Fire Chief will develop and implement a plan that will improve, recruit, and retain qualified, motivated and trained volunteer/ paid call fire fighters for the County of Madera.**

The Madera County Fire Department (MCFD) is in a serious state of transition due to a nationwide volunteer/PCF firefighter recruitment and retention problem. It is imperative that the Department understands the challenges discussed in this document, develop a problem solving attitude towards this issue and address any other issues that will allow the Madera County volunteer/paid call fire fighters to flourish.

Abstract

The MCFD is a combination fire department using both career and volunteer/paid call fire fighters to deliver the fire department required services. Career staff for the fire department has been provided since 1928 in a Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement with the California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). **(Attachment #1, PRC 4142, Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement.)**

The Fire Department needs to identify and implement innovative ways to increase and enhance the recruitment of new members into the fire companies. The economic and rural nature of Madera County would indicate that the communities volunteer fire companies will be needed to support our limited career staff well into the future. The Fire Department is a changing organization and must be flexible, open to change, effective and efficient. Without effective leadership and funding the Madera County Fire Department will not be able to provide the most cost effective or an efficient level of fire protection service to our citizens and public.

The County has seen a 20% decline of its volunteer/paid call firefighters over the past decade. The volunteer/paid call fire fighters in Madera County are at a critical point in time. They have a positive can-do spirit; on the other hand they have ever increasing challenges due to many issues impacting volunteer departments across the nation. The needs and realities of the volunteer fire service must be supported at the community and county levels. It is imperative that the Department takes measures that will ensure a strong future for volunteer/paid call fire fighters in Madera County.

Research Questions

It is hoped that the following research questions will assist the Board of Supervisors and its fire chief to address the current issues as well as future issues that may arise.

1. What are the leading causes for the decline in volunteers/paid call fire fighters in the Madera County Fire Department?
2. Does the Madera County Fire Department have a recruitment program to attract qualified applicants?
3. What policies and procedures are fire department managers using in administering the combined Madera County Fire Department especially the volunteer/paid call firefighter?
4. What types of training programs are offered to entice qualified personnel to become volunteer/paid call fire fighters? Is this training readily accessible and what additional training programs are available for existing volunteers/paid call fire fighters to stay highly trained and motivated?
5. Should all volunteer/paid call fire fighters be fully trained to all fire department standards or should there be a diversification plan that maximizes talent and skill of individuals who wish to volunteer, such as auxiliary, support, emergency medical services, and specialized driver/operator/volunteers?
6. Should the County reconsider payment to volunteer/paid call fire fighters for Emergency Medical Service (EMS) responses and if approved, how would it be funded?
7. With the ever-increasing time demands, should the County consider payment or reimbursement for mandated and required training?

Background and Significance

In 1987, after receiving a report from its Fire Protection Task Force, the Board of Supervisors officially started the process to create the Madera County Fire Department and recognized the over 250+ volunteers that provided the staffing to their 17 fire companies.

In 1988 the Board of Supervisors officially created the Madera County Fire Department with ordinances and resolutions that also appointed a Fire Chief. They also adopted a policy and procedures manual and a job description for its Fire Chief. In 1994 the Board of Supervisors approved the updated Madera County Fire Department paid call/volunteer firefighter operating policies (**Attachment #2**).

On March 30, 2010 at the direction of CAL FIRE (**Attachment #3**), the County was required to switch from the State historical FC-42 payroll/payment process to requiring the County to develop their own payroll payment system for volunteer/paid call firefighters completely separate from the State FC-42 process.

After much work by Madera County Human Resources Department, the county's classification plan was amended to classify paid call fire fighters and driver operators as extra help. The payroll change was successfully implemented by the County of Madera prior to the end of the 2009/2010 fiscal year and remains in place today.

Soon after the new payment system was implemented, and sometime in 2010, there was uncertainty over what policies and procedures were to be utilized to manage, counsel or otherwise discipline paid call fire fighters. There was also uncertainty over the appropriate avenue by which paid call fire fighters were to file grievances.

For many years, the Madera County Human Resources Department rarely became involved in employment matters for paid call staff, and prior to the implementation of the change in the payment system, it was understood and accepted that the change (including the 'extra help' designation) was for "payroll purposes only", and that no other terms for paid call firefighters would be amended.

It was soon realized that the County's policies and procedures governing the employment terms for other extra help employees were being applied to paid call fire fighters. At the time of the change in the payment system, all paid call fire fighters should have been managed pursuant to the referenced 1994 Board-approved operating policies with the 2011 County Counsel opinion, that states paid call fire fighters have a right to the County's formal grievance procedure. This determination was made based on an analysis that since paid call fire fighters are 'extra help' in the system, they should also be granted access to the grievance procedure like all other extra help employees. (**Attachment #4**)

In December 2003 a CAL FIRE report to the Board of Supervisors *lists 200 volunteer/paid call fire fighters and states that recruitment is not a problem as is retention and participation.* (Note: This number has been adjusted to reflect the administrative combining of Dairyland Station 4 with Chowchilla Station 2.) The report further states that “younger volunteers are using the training and experience to move on to permanent career fire fighter positions and volunteer fire companies were realizing a decline of volunteer/paid call fire fighters due to time commitments.” In the past ten years the MCFD has seen a steady decline in its ability to supply sufficient volunteer/paid call fire fighters to adequately staff its community fire stations.

<u>Stations</u>	<u>Existing Volunteers</u>	
	<u>2003</u>	<u>2013</u>
#2 Chowchilla	8	8
#10 Yosemite Lakes Park	24	19
#11 North Fork*	11	9
#13 Coarsegold*	3	3 (6 inactive)
#14 Bass Lake*	13	0 (3 inactive)
#15 Raymond	6	8
#16 Ahwahnee	8	8
#17 O'Neals	4	5
#18 Cedar Valley	5	7

*The communities of North Fork, Coarsegold, and Bass Lake are changing communities with aging residents; many with little interest in volunteering for the fire department and have changing social and economic issues. It will be very difficult in recruiting additional volunteer firefighters in these communities.

The remaining six stations are staffed with a combination of paid staffing and volunteer/paid call fire fighters.

<u>Stations</u>	<u>Paid Staff on Duty</u>	<u>Existing Volunteers</u>	
		<u>2003</u>	<u>2013</u>
#1 Madera	1	30	6 (5 inactive)
#3 Madera Acres	1	16	3 (1 inactive)
#8 Chukchansi	2	---	---
#9 Rolling Hills/Valley Children's	1	14	4 (EMS only)
#12 Oakhurst	1	14	12
#19 Bonnadelle Ranchos	1	<u>30</u>	17 (4 are support) <u>26</u> (resident apprentices) 139 (active) <u>15</u> (inactive)
	Totals	185	154

Note: The 26 resident apprentice fire fighters are graduates of local Fire Academy's who have completed their educational requirements but need six months of

apprenticeship to obtain their state certification. This program has been approved by prior Boards of Supervisors and provides additional trained firefighting resources to the Fire Department.

By 2013 the total number of volunteer/paid call fire fighters has greatly diminished from a high of over 250+ in 1987 to 185 in 2003, to 139 in 2013. This is a 20% reduction. If you exclude the resident apprentices and inactive volunteers you have 113 active volunteer paid call fire fighters as of June 2013. However the need for additional volunteer/paid call fire fighters and career staff has grown just like the increase in population. In 1985 the County had an estimated population of 68,000 we currently have a population of 160,000+.

Madera County doesn't have the economic resources to fully fund the fire department at the most efficient levels. That is the primary reason that a combination fire department makes the most economical sense and provides an efficient level of service.

The MCFD is a combination fire department consisting of 15 fire stations, five are staffed with one paid career fire fighter on duty 24/7, and one is funded through a pass through agreement with the Picayune Rancheria to provide fire protection to the Chukchansi Gold Resort and Casino and adjacent areas. This agreement provides two paid staff. Of those six stations, five have a volunteer fire company co-located with the one career staff. The remaining nine-standalone volunteer fire stations (no career staff) are staffed with volunteer/paid call fire fighters only and currently report to their respective Battalion Chief on administrative and personnel matter and to the closest CAL FIRE staffed fire station for equipment issues and training coordination.

Madera County Fire Department also has agreements with the City of Madera and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, based at the State prison in Chowchilla. The City offers assistance from two fire stations and the prison has one. Additionally, during the winter period (approximately October 15 to May 15), MCFD has an agreement to staff four CAL FIRE fire stations. **(PRC 4144, Attachment #5)** Ahwahnee, Bass Lake, Rancheria, and Raymond are among the fire stations listed above and they are each staffed with two career fire fighters (24/7) only one of which is paid for by the County of Madera. The County of Madera pays for FFI staffing and overtime only with Fire Captain (FC) and Fire Apparatus Engineer (FAE) staffing paid for by CAL FIRE.

Each volunteer/paid call station has a basic authorized strength of at least 20 fire fighters, if a station has a squad, water tender, or additional engine; the authorized strength may be increased. The authorized strength is:

1 volunteer fire fighter – Station Captain
3+ volunteer apparatus operators
16 volunteer paid call fire fighters

20 Total

This basic standard is based upon past Insurance Services Office (ISO) standards where they may recognize a ratio of 4-5 volunteers to 1 career fire fighter. The concept of "depth of volunteer resources" at any given time, based upon availability and training level, at least four personnel would be able to provide an emergency response. There may be new ISO standards that need to be reviewed and addressed.

This constitutes a county wide combination fire department (career and volunteer fire fighters) consisting of staffed stations with volunteer back up plus standalone volunteer stations and equipment, all are linked together with common equipment, communications, central dispatching, standard training and uniform fire suppression methods.

When analyzing the authorized and actual strength of the volunteer/paid call fire fighters, the following questions should be answered:

1. How many do we need? What are today's needs? What are the future needs?
2. How many can we afford?
3. How many can our communities and the County afford not to have?
4. At what point do you tell a community that depends on a standalone volunteer/PCF fire company that they no longer have a basic level of fire protection due to lack of firefighters?

The answer to these questions is based on: Levels and types of service offered, community support, community development and available financial support.

It also must be recognized that recruiting and retaining volunteers is a national problem. How do we better understand it? What are the reasons people are leaving or not joining? Several MCFD personnel, both career and volunteer, have recently attended the California State Firefighters Association (CSFA) Recruitment and Retention Training and the 2nd Edition Manual provided, cites:

Roots of Recruitment and Retention Challenges

Time Demand

92% of past volunteers claim that excessive time demand was a reason for leaving the department. Attributing factors include:

Training Requirements-

- Higher training standards and requirements
- Greater public expectation of the fire department's response capabilities
- Additional training demands to provide broader range of service

Increasing Call Volume-

- Fire department assuming wider roles
- Increasing medical call volume

- Increasing automatic fire alarms
- Greater reliance by public on fire department services

Ineffective Leadership

48% of past volunteers claim that ineffective leadership was a reason for leaving the department, including:

- Poor leadership and lack of coordination
- Authoritative management style
- Failure to manage change
- Hostile attitude between existing personnel and newcomers
- Lack of camaraderie

Changes in Sociological Conditions

- Transience
- Loss of community feeling
- Less community pride
- Less interest in volunteering
- “Me” generation
- Abuse of emergency services by the public
- Increasing housing costs in areas supported by volunteers
- Two income family working multiple jobs
- Aging communities

When using national studies the differences between Madera County and the rest of the nation must be taken into consideration. Madera County faces a variety of issues with recruitment and retention that may not be experienced elsewhere. But training provided by CSFA can assist the fire department in building a successful recruitment and retention program focusing on the local issues relevant to MCFD. Current volunteers/PCFS and career staff are identifying the challenges they are experiencing and can use their personal knowledge to benchmark areas for improvement.

Prior to actively recruiting volunteer fire fighters we should ask: Why volunteer fire fighters? The primary reason has been, and will continue to be, economics. There must also be a “political will” by the public as well as elected officials to improve fire protection level of service before you can truly answer; why volunteers. You can pick up any newspaper and see various articles about the fiscal health of cities, counties, and the State. Needless to say, public funds are in very short supply and this especially true of a rural county like Madera.

Volunteer/paid call fire fighters are really the only alternative to provide the current, expected levels of service until career staffing is increased, and even then, volunteer/PCF's will be a critical asset. There is little doubt about the value of highly trained career fire fighters, unfortunately with the economic conditions we are now experiencing, it will be difficult for the County to increase staffing of sufficient numbers of paid fire fighters to meet all of our community needs.

There is a tremendous need for personnel during the first few minutes of initial attack on structure fires (flash over), emergency medical response (brain death), or vehicle accidents (golden hour). If we cannot provide such personnel utilizing career fire fighters, then we must use a combination of the two, career and volunteer/paid call fire fighters. When available to respond, a trained fire company of volunteer/paid call fire fighters or a combination force can provide the necessary personnel to keep fire losses at a minimum and to effectively handle major fire/EMS/rescue incidents. All fire fighters must have personal protection equipment, be trained to a high level, be in good physical and mental shape, and give more of themselves. With proper leadership, local support from their community and appropriate levels of funding for safety equipment, fire equipment, training, and support of our local government officials, we have all of the ingredients necessary to provide for the greatest outcome.

So, "who is responsible for recruiting volunteer fire fighters?" The answer is simple, every member of the fire department. Every member from the Fire Chief down must share the responsibility for recruiting new members. The Fire Chief and the personnel that make up the department's team must be superior sales persons. As a sales person you will be asked why should I join or why should I buy our product? Every person has a basic need to feel important, to accomplish important things, and to grow as an individual.

Many of the volunteer and combination fire departments which seem to experience the most success in recruiting and maintaining volunteers are those that have adopted a "Bill of Rights". (**Attachment #6** is a sample of a Volunteer Bill of Rights) and they also demand a great deal from their volunteers. It is also important to provide the volunteers a chance to participate and grow as individuals within the fire department. Abraham Maslow identifies five primary points in his "Hierarchy of Needs" when describing what motivates people, particularly adults; self-actualization, esteem, and belonging are three of those basic needs.

As discussed previously, recruitment is sales. So who is your competition? It is not other fire departments, it is family obligations, other activities, events and organizations that community members have available to them. Therefore, perhaps now is the time to explore and diversify the membership opportunities in the volunteer fire companies. Everyone may not be physically able or have the time for the many hours of required training to become a core volunteer/paid call fire fighter or they may be interested in EMS only. They may still want to volunteer and they have skill sets and abilities to assist their community. Many of these skills may be in demand in the fire department. If MCFD was to maximize the classifications of volunteers to include auxiliary and support volunteers then some of the routine activities that "core" volunteer/paid call fire fighters do could be shifted. Auxiliary members could perform administrative support, record keeping, and station inventory such as hose, personal protective equipment, and other County owned fire equipment. As a "support volunteer" they could provide fire equipment maintenance, facility maintenance, vehicle rotation to the shop, and non-code 3

driving of support vehicles or other specialized equipment to incidents. As an "EMS volunteer" the program could encompass the ability for EMS trained individuals to provide EMS services only, drive and operate the appropriate EMS equipment. We do, however; also need to have sufficient "firefighting" volunteer/PCFs to provide for the "2 in 2 out" rule as well as "Rapid Intervention Crew" required in order to make an attack on a structure fire.

If the fire department is successful in recruiting the additional volunteer/paid call fire fighters that are so desperately needed then another challenge immediately faces the Madera County Fire Department and that is training and retention. The fire and rescue service is one of the most diverse and challenging professions known today. As a potential volunteer/paid call fire fighter in the MCFD, can you imagine having to be prepared to cope with emergency situations ranging from structure fires to child birth, to hazardous materials to heart attacks? The diversity of emergency responses and the skill sets required to successfully mitigate them are often under very stressful and emotional circumstances and the job of volunteer/paid call fire fighter is not for everyone.

The mission of the MCFD training program needs to develop volunteer/paid call fire fighters who will perform at any emergency scene by making the right decisions, execute the correct skills under difficult conditions and they must perform proficiently and consistently.

Applications received from community members who want to be Madera County Volunteer/Paid Call Fire Fighters must be acted upon promptly. This could be as simple as offering a temporary appointment pending meeting minimum training requirements or timely follow-up contacts to provide information as to status of the application. There are applications on file at the fire department administrative office pending the scheduling of the required training. This delays the next steps of their application process (County physicals and DMV background checks). Under current staffing circumstances the Fire Department has to stretch its resources and has only been able to provide one academy style training each year.

The concept is to get the recruit fire fighter quickly engaged in the fire department, give them the sense of belonging, and being part of an organization that accomplishes good things for their community. To bridge this major training gap the Fire Department is currently revisiting its policies and procedures on how to become a volunteer/paid call fire fighter.

The volunteer/paid call fire fighter in the Fire Department must be trained in all phases of fire service activities. Since 1987 (and before) the County of Madera recognized the importance of the volunteer fire companies and provided funding for a Fire Captain that was dedicated to training. In 2005/06 due to cost increases in the Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement with CAL FIRE the Board of Supervisors reduced one Battalion Chief (cost \$188,000) and back filled with a staff Fire Captain (net savings of \$51,000+). This new Fire Captain position was to provide backup

chief officer coverage, assist in volunteer training, recruitment, and retention. In the 2007/08 budgets, the Fire Chief requested that this Fire Captain position be reclassified back to a Battalion Chief to assist in battalion coverage, administration, and training oversight. Due to battalion coverage needs the actual net savings was approximately \$15,000. In reviewing the recent duties and responsibilities provided by CAL FIRE, it appears that this position based upon departmental needs has been internally redirected more to Battalion coverage than training, recruitment, and retention **(Attachment #7 and #8)**. Then in 2010/11 due to declining General Fund revenue the Fire Captain position assigned full time to provide required volunteer training, recruitment, and retention was unfunded. County Administration accepted this as a temporary reduction. (Attachment #9).

The number of volunteer fire fighters nationwide has declined 5-10% in the past ten years. From 2003 to 2013 the Madera County Fire Department has declined 20%. One of the contributing factors, nationwide is more rigorous training standards and the increased training hours to comply with the training standards. In Chapter III of the 1994 Adopted Paid Call/Volunteer Operating Policy the "basic" MCFD training program is outlined. With no budgeted training staff, volunteer training has evolved into a "Recruit Academy." The academy is only offered when 20+ applicants are available to attend. In 2012 with a pool of 13 recruits no local academy was scheduled, only about 8 applicants were willing to travel to Merced for training offered through Merced County Fire Department. If this academy format does not substantially add to the everyday fire (emergency) ground safety and effectiveness, it needs to be re-evaluated for streamlining delivery and the use of on-duty station personnel and qualified volunteers who can provide the required training and necessary documentation and certification as provided under the 1994 policies.

No discussion of training can occur without first reviewing the U. S. Fire Administration Report's on Fire Fighter fatalities and injuries (<http://www.usfa.fema.gov>):

The USFA reports focus on specific problems and direct training efforts towards finding solutions to relevant problems, highlight important findings and in this case, statistical information regarding firefighter fatalities.

35 of 61 fire fighters who died in the line of duty in 2011 were volunteers 39 of 83 fire fighters who died in the line of duty in 2012 were volunteers and in 2013 as of September 1 there have been 81 fatalities of which 27 have been volunteers. The leading cause of death for our volunteer fire fighters (nationally) continues to be heart attacks followed by vehicle accidents in their private vehicles responding to the incident or driving fire department water tenders.

As the department searches for a better training model it should develop one that is economically sustainable and convenient for the recruit. Every opportunity must be made to modernize and streamline the delivery of training. Using technology the Fire Department can meet many of the training standards using web-based self-study and certification guides, handbooks and multimedia format to reduce the expenditure of scarce resources (revenue and personnel). If the Fire Department is going to be successful in preventing serious injuries to its volunteer/paid call firefighters and prepare them to work in an emergency environment it must provide quality training and there needs to be a dedicated position to perform this essential task.

As the Madera County Fire Department call volume increases, based on increase of population and an aging population especially in the area of first responder emergency medical aid responses and the ever-increasing training standards, now is the time to re-address the decision to defund the Fire Captain Training Officer and revisit the Board of Supervisors policy regarding compensation for these demanding activities.

Other items for consideration in the recruitment and retention of volunteers/PCF's:

First, compensation for required training for any State mandated training for fire, EMS, and hazard materials should be compensated.

Second, any required basic or advanced training by the Department or re-certification of required training should also be compensated.

Third, it would be advantageous to look at whether the County has the ability to begin compensating for EMS responses and how that could enhance response, as well as recruitment and retention. This was originally proposed in the 1988 policies that created the MCFD but concerns were raised and that proposal was dropped. This new proposal would also require additional revenue. Possible revenue sources could be: 1) direct billing to the person requiring the service, or 2) a pass through billing to the ambulance company when a transport occurs and they bill for their services.

Fourth, when recruiting volunteer fire fighters, the Fire Department will spend approximately \$4,000 per person in orienting, equipping, and training those recruits.

Emergency Medical Service and training are a major source of the increased time demands on volunteer/paid call fire fighters. The increase in call volume is directly related both to the population increase and an aging population, and career and volunteer/paid call firefighters are doing more with less. Increasing the funding for EMS calls and training could be a direct way that policy makers can also assist in recruitment and retention of volunteer/paid call fire fighters who provide

significant benefit and economic savings to our communities, to the taxpayer, and Madera County.

Retention of trained volunteer firefighters is a substantial concern for the fire service. It is estimated that the national retention average of volunteer firefighters is approximately four years per person, per department. Luckily Madera County volunteer/paid call fire fighters average is approximately 7-1/2 years.

Retention of volunteer fire fighters is a complex issue with a number of variables that can contribute to the lack of longevity. In 1993 and revised in March 2004, the consulting firm Tri-Data, on behalf of the United States Fire Administration (USFA), conducted a national study titled *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service, Problems, and Solutions*. ***The study was assembled with input from volunteer departments across the country.*** The following areas were identified as major issues affecting retention of volunteer fire fighters:

- Volunteers face increased demands from the fire department stemming from the increase in emergency response calls; the need for ongoing training and the increasing need to undertake specialized training.
- Demands on the volunteer's time are also increasing away from the fire department as families struggle to balance the career and family obligations of today's two income families.
- Many of those who volunteer for the fire department do so in order to improve their employability. A volunteer fire department will provide training at no cost. This training can then be used to obtain a full-time position within the profession.
- The lack of a comprehensive benefit and incentive program. Benefits are necessary to protect the livelihood of the volunteer and his or her family in the event the volunteer suffers a significant injury or dies while on duty, while incentives are designed to recognize their personal achievements and to motivate them to improve their skills and participation.
- Finally, the authors of the Tri-Data Report cited that the most significant problem to retaining volunteer firefighters was the lack of local leadership within the volunteer fire department/company itself.

Note: Echoing the sentiment of that finding, as author of this report and past Madera County Fire Chief, I would strongly suggest that a promotional or appointment process be used in the MCFD that ensures fire ground safety for all MCFD members and the public. The traditional method of electing volunteer fire officer positions needs to be eliminated and be replaced with a system based upon merit, performance, education, training, skill, and experience. Elections

within the Company by-laws for the “social side” of the volunteer organization, president, treasurer, and secretary should continue.

Literature Review

Due to the time constraints a limited literature review was undertaken. The fire department as we have known in the past and as it currently exists today is constantly changing. Some of the problems of volunteer fire companies are becoming more apparent. Today more than ever volunteer fire companies are finding it difficult to recruit, train, and retain fire fighters. This is among the greatest challenges facing the volunteer fire companies and the Madera County Fire Department.

The National Volunteer Fire Counsel states that over the past 20 years the number of volunteer fire fighters has decreased by as much as 10%. During the past 10 years the Madera County Fire Department has experienced a 20% decline. The problem is clearly escalating and some new approaches need to be adopted in a timely manner.

In a fire engineering article, (Ross Chapman, 2011) discusses 21st Century Firefighting: "Preserving the volunteer Fire Service." He states: Several statistics that are very telling, the first being time commitment (training demand) and secondly leadership. (Good or bad leadership cannot be a dictatorship.) Volunteers often have no way to protect their rights other than scale back their involvement or quit. Career employees however are bound by explicit union contracts that guarantee certain rights and protection. The volunteer system, when supervision is provided by unionized career fire fighters must have checks and balances that also protect the volunteer fire fighter. Without this protection the volunteer system will fail.

Charlie Dickinson, former Deputy Administrator of the United States Fire Administration, noted that volunteer fire fighting is destined to become a thing of the past if fire chiefs do not recognize these issues and adopt proactive approaches to dealing with them. He goes on to state: Maintaining these front line responders through retention and recruitment is paramount to America's safety and security. We must continue to find creative ways to support and maintain these critical first responders.

The Butte County Fire and Rescue Department, a long-time CAL FIRE Fire Protection Agreement is also a combination fire department and discusses on their home page (www.buttecounty.newfire/volunteer) the complexity and difficulty of recruitment, training and retention of volunteer fire fighters. "One of their objectives is to maintain a culture that embraces, encourages and appreciates the citizen volunteer fire fighters." They also go one step further, they do Program Evaluations by anonymous surveys of volunteer fire fighters addressing issues such as respect for leadership, competency of the organization, image of the fire department, respect for peoples time, communications, regularly scheduled meetings with volunteer company officers and the career chief officer, including the

fire chief to provide information and direction and to receive information about volunteer training needs and ideas.

In Fire Chief magazine, October 2012, an article on Recruitment of Volunteers and Eliminating Roadblocks Chief Hank Teran discusses going against tradition in recruitment by changing the way people could volunteer. He opened up an EMS and water tender/operator program. Some volunteers do not necessarily want to fight a fire or meet all the training requirements to fight a fire. He routinely heard that there was too much training. Flexibility is really important to volunteers, you must as fire chief, also be flexible in training and recognize the time requirements, especially in how the training is delivered.

The Cal State Fire Fighters Association, CSFA, in their Recruitment and Retention Manual, second edition discuss that "recruitment and retention challenges continue to grow and that some volunteer organizations maintain good membership while others continue to function with reduced numbers". It also states that those organizations that seek solutions and adapt to a changing personnel environment will be successful. Individuals are still willing to give their time to become a volunteer provided that the organization:

- Provide an experience that is rewarding and worth their time.
- The training requirements are not excessive.
- The time demands are adaptable and manageable.
- They are awarded with a personal sense of value.
- There is good leadership with minimal conflict.
- And there is ample support for the organization.

In 1993 and revised in March 2004 the U.S. Fire Administration conducted a national study titled *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service, Problems and Solutions*. The consulting firm of Tri-Data identified that volunteer fire fighters had declined about 10% between 1984 and 1993. This decline was based upon increasing time demands; lack of benefit or incentive programs and finally, the lack of quality leadership within the fire department were cited as the most significant problem to retaining volunteer/paid call fire fighters. Note: The value of good management and the challenge of managing a combination fire department passages are taken directly from the Tri-Data report and listed in Findings and Discussions.

The implication from this limited literate review is that the Madera County Fire Department needs to immediately develop and implement a recruitment and retention plan for volunteer/paid call fire fighters, to look at innovative ways to provide training of the volunteer/paid call fire fighters, to regularly communicate with the Madera County Fire Department volunteer/paid call fire fighters regarding training needs and requirements, to evaluate their current content, delivery and effectiveness of volunteer/paid call fire fighter training. Finally to effectively

manage a combination department, both career and volunteer/PCF leaders must have the necessary qualities, attributes and characteristics that are essential to be effective leaders. The future success of the Madera County Fire Department will be dependent on its current and future fire chiefs and their ability to manage change, set the organization's standard on ethics and lead by example. Most importantly they must embrace the culture that encourages and supports the volunteer/paid call fire fighter.

Findings and Discussions

1. Madera County Fire Department is a combination fire department using both career and volunteer/PCFs to deliver the fire department required services. Career staff for the fire department has been provided since 1928 in a cooperative fire protection agreement with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). Cal Fire provides administration, operations, training, and communications to the County of Madera's fire service. Madera County's fire department is generally a 100% General Fund expense.
2. In 1987, after receiving a report from its Fire Protection Task Force, the Board of Supervisors officially created the Madera County Fire Department and recognized the over 250+ volunteers that provide the staffing to their 17 fire companies.
3. The 1988 ordinances that legally created the MCFD, the 1991 by-laws and the 1994 paid call/volunteer operating policy remain the guiding principles for the Madera County Fire Department until officially modified by the Board of Supervisors. It needs to be noted that the ordinance, resolution, and policies are outdated and need to be updated to current rules, regulations, and laws.
4. On March 30, 2010 at the direction of CAL FIRE (Attachment #3), the County was required to switch from the State historical FC-42 payroll/payment process to requiring the County to develop their own payroll payment system for volunteer/paid call firefighters completely separate from the State FC-42 process.
5. After much work by Madera County Human Resources Department, the county's classification plan was amended to classify paid call/fire fighter, extra help and paid call driver operators, extra help. The payroll change was successfully implemented by the County of Madera prior to the end of the 2009/2010 fiscal year and remains in place today.
6. By 2013 the total number of volunteer/paid call fire fighters has greatly diminished from a high of over 250+ in 1987 to 185 in 2003, to 139 in 2013. This is a 20% reduction. If you exclude the resident apprentices and inactive volunteers you have 113 active volunteer paid call fire fighters as of June 2013. However the need for additional volunteer/paid call fire fighters and career staff has grown just like the increase in population. In 1985 the County had an estimated population of 68,000 we currently have a population of 160,000+.

7. Madera County doesn't have the economic resources to fully fund the fire department at the most efficient levels. That is the primary reason that a combination fire department makes the most economical sense and provides an efficient level of service.
8. Volunteer/paid call fire fighters are really the only alternative to provide the current, expected levels of service until career staffing is increased, and even then, volunteer/PCF's will be a critical asset. There is little doubt about the value of highly trained career fire fighters, unfortunately with the economic conditions we are now experiencing, it will be difficult for the County to increase staffing for sufficient numbers of paid fire fighters to meet all of our community needs.
9. The mission of the MCFD training program needs to develop volunteer/paid call fire fighters who will perform at any emergency scene by making the right decisions, execute the correct skills under difficult conditions and they must perform proficiently and consistently.
10. The number of volunteer fire fighters nationwide has declined 5-10% in the past ten years. From 2003 to 2013 the Madera County Fire Department has declined 20%. One of the contributing factors, nationwide is more rigorous training standards and the increased training hours to comply with the training standards.
11. 35 of 61 fire fighters who died in the line of duty in 2011 were volunteers 39 of 83 fire fighters who died in the line of duty in 2012 were volunteers and in 2013 to September 1 there have been 81 fatalities of which 27 have been volunteers. The leading cause of death for our volunteer fire fighters (nationally) continues to be heart attacks followed by vehicle accidents in their private vehicles responding to the incident or driving fire department water tenders.
12. As the Madera County Fire Department call volume increases, based on increase of population especially in the area of first responder emergency medical aid responses and the ever-increasing training standards, now is the time to re-address the decision to defund the Fire Captain Training Officer and revisit the Board of Supervisors policy regarding compensation for these demanding activities.
13. Emergency Medical Service and training are a major source of the increased time demands on volunteer/paid call fire fighters. The increase in call volume is directly related both to the population increase and an aging population, and career and volunteer/paid call firefighters are doing more with less. Increasing the funding for EMS calls and training could be a direct way that policy makers can also assist in recruitment and retention of volunteer/paid call fire fighters who provide significant benefit and

economic savings to our communities, to the taxpayer, and Madera County. It should be noted that some State mandated training might be reimbursable under SB 90.

14. When recruiting volunteer fire fighters, the Fire Department will spend approximately \$4,000 per person in orienting, equipping, and training those recruits.
15. The national retention average of volunteer firefighters is approximately four years per person, per department. Luckily Madera County volunteer/paid call fire fighters average is approximately 7-1/2 years.

Discussion

The Value of Good Management

The following passage is taken directly from the Tri-Data report.

“The ability of a fire department to retain its people is directly related to its ability to manage those people. *It was unanimous among workshop attendees that poor management contributed heavily to people leaving the volunteer fire service.* The leadership issue was considered the most important; in one way or another, nearly all the other causes were either directly or indirectly traced back to the leadership Problem.” (Emphasis added.)

The Challenges of Managing a Combination Department

“Another difficult management challenge is the management of fire departments staffed with both career and volunteer personnel-combination departments. Combination fire departments are difficult to manage because career and volunteer fire fighters often have different institutional interests. The individual volunteer’s sense of identity is important. Although the financial consequence of resigning a volunteer position is small, the psychological cost to an individual is extremely high because of the fire fighter’s great personal investment in the organization. The structural distrust the volunteer and career groups have for each other might be more tolerable if each group did not have to work with the other, but they usually do. Efficiency is a desirable goal; however, reaching that goal can be a tortuous path of management anxiety arising from personnel conflict between the two groups.”

Career and volunteer/PCFs should never lose sight of their basic mission to serve the public.

Grand Jury Report

On April 15, 2013 the Madera County Grand Jury issued their final report on the MCFD. The purpose of their initial review was to inspect fire stations, fire equipment, and the management of volunteer fire company funds. During these visits and interviews they uncovered numerous additional concerns regarding the Fire Department.

The Grand Jury Report noted allegation(s) of a contentious work environment. To date Human Resources has no information to support the allegations. Those with complaints should file documents with Human Resources who will take appropriate action.

Pursuant to Penal Code Section 933(c) on May 6, 2013 the Fire Chief provided responses and comments regarding the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations. Additionally, on September 10, 2013 the Board of Supervisors submitted their response to the Grand Jury, both of which are included as attachments #10 and #11 to this report.

Recommendations

The information obtained in the Literature Review, Grand Jury Report, personal discussions and meetings with the County Administrative Officer, Human Resources, County Fire Chief, County Counsel, individual fire department members, both career and volunteer/paid call fire fighters, reviewing Board of Supervisor adopted policies, Cal Fire documents and policies and personal background provided sufficient amounts of data and management information to formulate recommendations to improve the administration, training, recruitment, and retention of Madera County Fire Departments volunteer/paid call fire fighters and the Cal Fire contracted management.

It is clear that there are many issues facing the Fire Department and its Fire Chief (department head appointed by the Board of Supervisors) and that some critical issues have moved beyond the department level and now default to the County Administrative Officer, Human Resources and Board of Supervisors to provide resolution.

PERSONNEL

In the Grand Jury Report of April 15, 2013 there is an allegation(s) of a contentious work environment. To date Human Resources has no information to support the allegations. Those with complaints should file with Human Resources who will advise Cal Fire to investigate.

1. Fire Chief to review the 1988 Board-approved documents pertaining to the Madera County Fire Department's Policy Statement and Administrative and Operational Policies; the 1991 by-laws for Madera County Fire Companies; and the 1994 policy and procedure manual to continue the ongoing efforts to update operating policies. It is recommended that the proposed "2010 Policy and Procedure Drafts" be disregarded and use the above-referenced documents as a starting point. Fire Chief to identify updated policies, such as firefighter discipline, payroll systems, procedures to become a volunteer firefighter, chain of command (both operational and social), work with the executive/advisory committee and bring to Human Resources and County Counsel for review prior to a requesting a Board agenda item. The Fire Chief will communicate policies and direction related to the volunteer system, including, but not limited to: training of squad drivers, the reporting relationship between volunteer station captains and career personnel and other training policies.
2. Fire Chief to consider changing the name of the "Executive Committee" to "Advisory Committee." This committee needs to be chaired by the Chief, Deputy Chief, or Division Chief. They have the authority and

responsibility to make decisions and can provide information and direction to the department.

3. Fire Chief to direct the establishment of a co-located volunteer fire company to assist the career personnel assigned to Station 8, Chukchansi.
4. As permitted by State and Federal Law, Fire Chief to consider developing a diversification plan that maximizes individual talent in order to enhance the overall efficiency, safety, and effectiveness of the volunteer system to include a support/auxiliary volunteer program to provide additional opportunities for potential citizen volunteers to serve their communities.
5. Fire Chief to prepare a staff report for the County Administrative Officer detailing the proposed payment and reimbursement for volunteer/paid call fire fighters for required training and emergency medical responses. Study to include cost estimates, policies, and funding sources.
6. Fire Chief to establish a Department Training Committee, consisting of career and volunteer personnel, to meet quarterly, or more frequently, to discuss, and evaluate training needs, priorities, delivery, and effectiveness. The outcome of this group will be a yearly training calendar that meets the needs of the Madera County Fire Department.
7. Fire Chief to request the "refunding" of the Fire Captain training position be considered during the mid-year budget analysis. This position would provide the required training to MCFD volunteer/PCFs, coordinate recruitment and retention and be the Department's Safety Officer.
8. It is agreed upon that the provisions of the Firefighter Bill of Rights (2008) shall be applied when administering the management of volunteer fire fighters. (Pending legal review)
9. Fire Chief to consider contracting with an outside consultant to provide training for MCFD fire officers (career and volunteer) to assist them in understanding the contemporary issues of management/leadership within a combination fire department, focusing on recruitment, retention and in depth discussions regarding volunteer fire fighters, compliance and professional standards.
10. Fire Chief and Human Resources to review the duties and responsibilities for the county funded Battalion Chief for compliance with Board action and fire department letters (attachment #8).

11. Fire Chief and County Administrative Officer to meet as needed to discuss and review fire department functions and needs, contract issues, policy guidance, and other situations where the county, city, and State interest may be enhanced.

12. The Board of Directors of the Madera County Volunteer/Paid Call Firefighters, Inc. to initiate meeting with the Fire Chief to discuss their historical role and responsibility to preserve and improve the future of the Volunteer/Paid Call Fighters in Madera County and need to review their charter, constitution and by-laws to ensure that all members are represented and that the organization supports the mission of the Madera County Fire Department.

Conclusion

From this list of recommendations there are numerous options and alternatives for consideration by the Board of Supervisors and its appointed Fire Chief. The recommendations will generate support or rejection based upon how different people view the facts contained in the body of the report, which is unavoidable. The recommendations represent established fire protection best business practices and need to be read in the context of public policy. The Madera County Board of Supervisors takes a specific interest on this issue as it has an effect on almost every citizen who lives, works, or recreates in the unincorporated area of Madera County.

The County of Madera will continue to delegate a great amount of trust to CAL FIRE with little monitoring and with the expectation that they will meet their obligations to Madera County Fire Department.

CAL FIRE will also continue to provide the best-integrated and cooperative fire protection that is cost effective, innovative, and responsible to the needs of the Department and public.

References

Grand Jury Report, 1986

Fire Protection Task Force, appointed by Board of Supervisors submits final report and accepted by Board of Supervisors October 22, 1987.

Board of Supervisors response to the Grand Jury Report, November 1987.

County Counsel memo regarding resolutions and ordinances, Madera County Fire Department, March 24, 1988.

Appointment of County Fire Chief/Fire Warden, Government Code Section 24008, April 12, 1988.

Establishment of Policy Statement. April 12, 1988 – acknowledged by the Board of Supervisors.

Ordinance No. 515 – Creation of Madera County Fire Department, April 18, 1988.

Resolution 88-187, Duties and Responsibilities of Madera County Fire Chief, June 14, 1988.

Countywide By-Laws for Madera County Volunteer Fire Companies approved by Executive Committee, August 12, 1991.

Madera County Fire Department Paid Call Volunteer Fire Fighter Operating Policies adopted by the Board of Supervisors, March 1994.

Amendment to Classification Plan setting salary for the positions of Paid Call Firefighter Extra Help, March 2010.

New Policy and Procedures Manual, prepared by CalFire, October/November 2010.

County fire station internal investigation, 2010.

CDF Manual of Instructions Section 8500, Cooperative Fire.

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Human Resources, grievances, and complaints from volunteer paid call fire fighters.

Rural Fire Service Leadership Handbook on Recruitment and Retention, Cal State Fire Fighters Association, Chief Ron Coleman.

Guide to Best Practices in Volunteer Fire Fighter Recruitment and Retention, University of Pittsburg, Institute of Politics, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

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