

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFFING CAPACITY SUMMARY

Citygate's review and evaluation of the Department's administrative support organization finds that the management organization and most headquarters programs are inadequately staffed and not in conformance with Minnesota requirements and national best practices to provide a properly trained, equipped, and supported response force. Ensuring a prompt response with safe, competent service delivery requires management, planning, and compliance records. Compliance regulations for fire services operation have steadily increased over the last 20 plus years, mandating practices for the proper hiring, training, and supervision of operational personnel.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are Citygate's findings and recommendations as contained throughout this report.

Service Capacity

Findings

- Finding #1:** The Department's response unit types are appropriately configured to protect against the hazards likely to impact the City.
- Finding #2:** There is very little demand for Dive Team services despite the Dive Team representing an intensive program that creates substantial potential risk, training, and capital cost burdens for the City and Department.
- Finding #3:** Minnesota state law tasks county sheriff's departments with responsibility for underwater rescue and recovery.

Recommendations

- Recommendation #1:** The City should discuss with the County transferring underwater search and recovery services to the Scott County Sheriff's Office in conformance with state law responsibility while maintaining the City's programs for surface water and ice rescue capability.

Deployment

Findings

- Finding #4:** The City and Department have not yet established response performance goals consistent with best practice recommendations as published by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International and the National Fire Protection Association.

Doing so will guide future fire crew staffing, apparatus types, and deployment methods.

- Finding #5:** The Department’s current deployment model provides only a single four-person crew at Station 1 daily to provide immediate response capacity for the 51.5-square mile service area. Additional response capacity is provided by automatic mutual aid from the Tribal Public Safety Department or callback of off-duty part-time personnel or mutual aid as needed and available.
- Finding #6:** The Department has a standard response plan that considers risk and establishes an appropriate initial response for each incident type; each type of call for service receives the combination of engines, trucks, specialty units, and command officers customarily needed to effectively control that type of incident based on Department experience.
- Finding #7:** The two fire station locations cover the sections of the City with the highest incident demand and a 5:00-minute travel time spacing of stations meets the City’s needs.
- Finding #8:** Continued significant growth in Shakopee to the east, and township growth in the west and south, could drive the need for a third—or even a fourth—smaller neighborhood station with one staffed fire engine each.
- Finding #9:** Annual service demand has slightly increased post-Covid, but the Station 1 crew model also started within this period, and more EMS incidents have been responded to. However, the Department currently only responds to “high-priority” EMS calls as designated by Scott County Dispatch.
- Finding #10:** The rate of simultaneous incidents is growing, placing more pressure on a single on-duty unit.
- Finding #11:** The City provides little mutual aid to others and the contract townships do not materially affect the statistical demand for service.
- Finding #12:** The City should plan to transition EMS first response to the Fire Department. Police should also be utilized for the very infrequent life-threatening incidents along with Fire.
- Finding #13:** Call processing performance by Scott County’s 9-1-1 Dispatch Center is substantially slower than any nationally recommended best practice goal.
- Finding #14:** Total response times from 9-1-1 answer to first-unit arrival are 4:21 minutes longer than best practice recommendations for positive outcomes in a suburban city. This is due to two reasons: (1) slow dispatch processing and (2) most responses only occurring from Station 1.

Finding #15: The City is not capable of fielding an effective multiple-unit response force to building fires, more so from only one fire station. To assemble the required number of total personnel, the City is also dependent on mutual aid also arriving quickly. The City needs to plan to staff both fire stations.

Finding #16: The burden on part-time firefighters is at its limit. After filling shifts for just one staffed unit, they are not keeping up with training when not on shift and emergency callbacks. It would take two or more times the number of part-time firefighters to staff a second unit and be available for training and callbacks. The costs to train, equip, and manage that large of a workforce would be significant.

Finding #17: Shakopee should follow federal wage and hour regulations and establish one pay rate for regular and overtime hours for career personnel. Firefighters should not be in unique “dual-role” functions.

Recommendations

Based on the technical analysis and findings contained in this section, Citygate makes the following deployment recommendations.

Recommendation #2: The City should obtain the appropriate legal opinions and enact changes to the Department to be that of a “combination” department of both career and part-time employees. Employees should have one clear set of positions and compensation and be in one pension system. One likely solution is to enact a set of processes like those already undertaken by other Twin Cities Metro Area cities:

- 2A:** Create a new part-time firefighter/EMT position.
- 2B:** Firefighters hired as paid-on-call personnel under the relief pension should be encouraged to reapply for a new, part-time firefighter/EMT position including new requirements for training compliance to state law and to be considered for staffing shifts.
- 2C:** These new part-time firefighter/EMT positions should be included in the state’s PERA-coordinated pension plan as opposed to a Fire Relief pension plan designed for volunteer and paid-on-call firefighters.
- 2D:** Changing from relief to a state-based career employee PERA pension plan requires dissolving the relief association under Minnesota state statute. This allows those who transition to full-time work and those not wanting to reapply as part-time firefighter/EMTs to not be penalized in regards to losing their relief pension. In making this conversion, the City

must follow Minnesota State Statute 424B.22 for Relief Association Dissolution and Retirement Plan Termination.

Recommendation #3: Adopt Deployment Policies: The City Council should adopt complete performance measures to aid deployment planning and to monitor performance. The measures of time should be designed to deliver outcomes that will prevent death or more serious injury for EMS patients upon arrival when possible and keep small but serious fires from becoming more serious. With this in mind, Citygate recommends the following measures.

- 3.1 Distribution of Fire Stations:** To treat pre-hospital medical emergencies and control small fires, the first-due unit should arrive within 8:30 minutes, 90 percent of the time, from receipt of the 9-1-1 call at the Scott County Dispatch Center from two staffed fire stations. This equates to a 1:30-minute call processing / dispatch time, a 2:00-minute crew turnout time, and a 5:00-minute travel time.
- 3.2 Multiple-Unit Effective Response Force for Serious Emergencies:** To confine building fires near the room or rooms of origin, keep vegetation fires under one acre in size, and treat multiple medical patients at a single incident, a multiple-unit ERF of at least 12 personnel, plus at least one Chief Officer, should arrive within 12:30 minutes from the time of 9-1-1 call receipt, 90 percent of the time, within the suburban population density areas of the City. This equates to a 1:30-minute dispatch time, 2:00-minute crew turnout time, and a 9:00-minute travel time.
- 3.3 Hazardous Materials Response:** To protect the City from the hazards associated with uncontrolled release of hazardous and toxic materials, the fundamental mission of the Department's response is to isolate the hazard, deny entry into the hazard zone, and minimize impacts on the community. This can be achieved with a first-due total response time of 8:30 minutes or less in the suburban population density areas of the City to provide initial hazard evaluation and/or mitigation actions. After the initial evaluation is completed, a determination can be made whether to request additional resources to mitigate the hazard.
- 3.4 Technical Rescue:** To respond to technical rescue emergencies as efficiently and effectively as possible with enough trained personnel to facilitate a successful rescue, a first-due total response time of 8:30 minutes or less is required in the suburban population density areas of the City to evaluate the situation and initiate rescue actions. Additional

resources should assemble as needed, within a total response time of 12:30 minutes within the suburban population density areas of the City, to safely complete rescue/extrication and delivery of the victim to the appropriate emergency medical care facility.

Recommendation #4: Add career and part-time staffing at both stations to provide 4-person shift staffing 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Recommendation #5: As the career model expands, transition first responder EMS assistance from the Police to the Fire Department.

Recommendation #6: As soon as funds permit, remodel both fire stations to provide adequate spaces for 24-hour per day shift personnel.

Administrative Support Staffing Capacity

Findings

Finding #18: The Department's training program is informal, with no annual training needs assessment driving an annual training plan in conformance with Minnesota requirements. Since being made aware of training deficiencies in December, the Interim Fire Chief and administrative staff have made great progress in addressing these issues.

Finding #19: The training hours delivered are not close to being in balance to the Minnesota 11 Core Elements.

Finding #20: The Department lacks documentation of federally required annual hazardous material response training.

Finding #21: The Department is slightly understaffed to accomplish all of its administrative responsibilities and tasks.

Finding #22: The current interim administrative staff is at its limit and is working more hours (and managing more assignments) than it should be.

Finding #23: The Department is currently operating without a comprehensive set of administrative and operational policies and procedures but has contracted with a private company that specializes in policies for public safety and is currently working on creating new policies and procedures.

Finding #24: The fire prevention workload increased substantially over 2023 due to the additional building and development activity in the City, adversely impacting staff's ability to conduct all required annual fire and life safety inspections.

Finding #25: The full-time response personnel on the engine are also assigned to conduct field inspections under the direction of the Fire Marshal, often resulting in missed inspection appointments or interrupted inspections due to emergency responses by the engine crew.

Finding #26: The Fire Marshal intends to retire within the next few years; however, there is no succession plan in place for this highly technical position.

Recommendations

Recommendation #7: The City should consider funding an additional 1.0 FTE Administrative Assistant as soon as possible to resolve existing fire administrative workload capacity gaps, provide enhanced capacity, and minimize or eliminate any potential single points of administrative support failure.

Recommendation #8: The City should consider reorganizing the Department administrative staff to include a Deputy Chief to oversee field operations and training and ensure compliance with all federal and state mandates, and an Administrative Deputy Chief to supervise the administrative assistant and oversee the budget, apparatus, facilities, schedules, and grants to better fit the needs of a Department with both full-time and part-time response staff.

Recommendation #9: Complete the development and adoption of a comprehensive set of administrative and operational policies and procedures.

Recommendation #10: Consider focusing the inspection responsibilities of response personnel to existing businesses to minimize disruption to new building projects.

Recommendation #11: Develop and implement a succession plan for the Fire Marshal position to ensure continuity of services upon retirement of the current incumbent. This could include hiring a Fire Inspector for succession planning and additional life safety inspections should be a priority.

Recommendation #12: The City Administrator should consider transferring the Emergency Manager role and responsibilities to the Fire Chief.

COMPREHENSIVE STAFFING RECOMMENDATION AND PHASING

Based on Citygate's comprehensive review, the Department's current four-person crew model at Station 1 needs to be expanded to provide (1) a more equitable *speed of response* to all areas of the City and (2) an improved *weight of response* for more serious or concurrent incidents. To achieve this, Citygate recommends the City "reboot" the Department by converting the staffing system to that of a combination department, thus utilizing a modest number of full-time personnel

at both stations to provide a guaranteed minimum daily response staffing level under best practices and state regulations on fire services. The two-station staffing plan is then augmented by a part-time firefighter/EMT program, with the firefighters scheduled to work or called back under a singular hourly wage and state pension structure.

Citygate recommends the City consider funding additional personnel across a phasing period of a few fiscal years to eventually reach the master plan result of a minimum of eight personnel plus a chief officer on duty daily for supervision and incident command as summarized in the following table. The recommended staffing delivers a minimum, safe firefighting response for *speed of attack* and can enter burning structures under the two-in/two-out federal and state safety standard,¹ plus provide for incident command and a pump operator.

Table 2—Recommended Minimum Daily Response Staffing Model

Station	Career Personnel			Total On-Duty Staffing
	Battalion Chief	Captain	Firefighter	
1	1	1	3	5
2	0	1	3	4
Total	1	2	6	9

Citygate suggests that any full-time position vacancy be backfilled first with full-time personnel on overtime, and second with part-time personnel. Part-time personnel can be used for an additional staffing past four at each station, more so on busy community special event or bad weather days. As another option, with four or more firefighters at each station, a station could staff a fire engine *and* a quick response EMS unit.

The Department also needs to meet administrative and safety regulations, as an appropriately staffed headquarters team is needed to provide the leadership, training, and accountability necessary for the provision of safe and effective service delivery. This organization can be built in phases over a few fiscal years as summarized in the following table—ideally assisted by federal firefighter staffing grants. Once the Council provides policy direction, staff can provide the detailed expenses per fiscal year. Citygate recommends a four-year plan to recruit, train, and on-board the new and additional personnel that will be needed to achieve the recommended staffing model.

¹ [https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134#1910.134\(g\)\(4\)](https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs/regulations/standardnumber/1910/1910.134#1910.134(g)(4))

Phasing Plan

Gathering community input, designing and approving a funding plan for increased career staffing, and recruiting and hiring all take time. Given the cost and administrative burden on a small city to grow and gradually obtain the full funding needed, Citygate offers this phasing plan, which could be executed on a per-fiscal-year basis. The following are *career* personnel changes/additions:

Step 1: 2024 Budget Amendment

Increase career staff from 11 to 14. However, there were 3 new Battalion Chiefs in the approved 2024 budget. These positions are converted to 3 Fire Captains for line crew supervision. 2 firefighters and an Administrative Assistant are added. The budgeted Assistant Fire Chief and Administrative Captain positions are converted to 2 Deputy Chiefs. These moves improve headquarters capacity and add to the single fire engine shift staffing.

Step 2: 2025 Budget

Add 1 Fire Inspector, 3 Fire Captains, and 6 firefighters. Improve fire prevention and add a second staffed engine at Fire Station 2.

Step 3: 2026 Budget

Add 6 firefighters. Increase both engine crews to 4 career personnel each day, 1 Captain and 3 firefighters.

Step 4: 2027 Budget

Add 3 Battalion Chiefs, one per platoon, for 24/7/365 immediate response command and safety oversight.

The final career force will then be 18 career firefighters, 6 Fire Captains and 3 Battalion Chiefs. These personnel will staff two engines with a minimum of 6 personnel plus the Battalion Chief. One firefighter per shift will backfill for vacation and sick relief. The part-time staff will work scheduled assignments to add a fourth firefighter on each engine.

The following table shows these changes by year.

Table 3—Proposed Fire Department Staffing Summary

Step/Position	Total Career Personnel	Added Career Personnel	Annual Net Cost Increase ²
Present	8		
Step 1 – 2024			
Headquarters		1	
Captains		3	
Firefighters		2	
Total Count and Costs	14	6	\$44,414
Step 2 – 2025			
Headquarters		1	
Captains		3	
Firefighters		6	
Total Count and Costs	24	10	\$1,045,117
Step 3 – 2026			
Firefighters		6	
Total Count and Costs	30	6	\$502,500
Step 4 – 2027			
Battalion Chiefs		3	
Step 4 Net Costs	33	3	\$121,901
Total			\$1,713,932

Note:

- The savings in Step 1 result from some of the added expenses being already budgeted, plus other savings in the part-time program and phasing of actual hiring.
- Step 1 does not reflect full 12 months of new position employment as hiring does not all occur on the first day of the new fiscal year.
- The added expenses in Steps 2 through 4 do reflect the full cost of the prior years' additions plus the new staff in the next step.
- The total added expense is in current employee costs; as such, the amount does not include inflation or future pay or benefit changes.

² City of Shakopee Fire and Finance Department estimates based on total compensation per position type.

NEXT STEPS

Citygate offers the following suggested sequential next steps.

Near-Term

- ◆ Review and absorb the content, findings, and recommendations of this report.
- ◆ Consider adopting revised response performance measures as recommended.
- ◆ Ask staff to return with the costs and phasing to implement the study's recommendations as desired by the City Council.
- ◆ Identify funding to begin phasing/implementation Step 1.

Longer-Term

- ◆ Consider applying for federal firefighter staffing (SAFER) grants.
- ◆ Identify funding for the repairs or modifications needed to provide 24/7 staffing from both fire stations.
- ◆ Work with other local fire departments and the Sheriff's Office to improve 9-1-1 center performance time for serious emergencies.
- ◆ Monitor response performance against adopted goals.