



## Bennett Associates

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335 Washington Street, Suite 12 • Norwell, MA 02061-1900

781.659.9950 • Fax 781.659.9969

**TOWN OF ACTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
POLICE and FIRE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION STUDY  
FINAL REPORT  
MARCH 28, 2000**



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March 28, 2000

Mr. Donald P. Johnson  
Town Manager  
Town Hall  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Please find enclosed Bennett Associate's Final Report of the Police and Fire Department Organization Study.

On behalf of Bennett Associates, I would like to extend my appreciation to you and your staff and in particular Acting Police Chief Widmayer and Fire Chief Craig who provided us with direction, advise, and assistance in the completion of this study.

We hope that the Final Report and the advise and instruction we have provided are helpful to you and the Board of Selectmen in implementing the Plan's recommendations. If you should be in need of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 781-659-9950, ext. 14 or at [djacobs@bennettsearch.com](mailto:djacobs@bennettsearch.com).

Again, your cooperation and support during the completion of this project was most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Donald I. Jacobs  
Project Manager

## **INTRODUCTION**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Acton retained the firm of Bennett Associates to perform an evaluation of current operations and staffing levels of the Police and Fire Departments as well as to analyze its facility requirements. This study was commissioned by the Town at a unique transitional time and opportunity for change. The Town has taken the proactive step of having a study conducted to help the current Fire Chief and the new Police Chief (who should be appointed within the next several months), the management team, the Town's Town Manager and elected and appointed officials understand their public safety administrative and policy options to meet immediate and long-term needs. This study helped to frame these choices through:

- **Thorough analysis of the use of existing resources.** An essential objective for this project was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the current organization, operations, and services provided by the Police and Fire Departments. This objective was designed to address the question of whether the current departments provide an appropriate base upon which to build future public safety services in the Town of Acton.
- **Methodology focused on the broad input from staff in each department.** The Project Team utilized a variety of data collection and interviewing approaches to obtain data from management and staff. In addition, the project team utilized a variety of specific analytical approaches for each department and service area. The data collection and analytical activities included the following:
  - At the beginning of the study the project team interviewed the Town Manager, the Assistant Town Manager, the School Superintendent, the Town Engineer, Public Works Director, the Building Inspector and the department heads of each of the departments included in the study. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain an overview of the operation of each department as well as to quickly identify areas of concern.
  - Additional interviews were conducted with supervisors, the heads of both department unions and other staff with unique responsibilities within each department. These interviews were focused on gathering data, and developing a more detailed understanding of operational issues within each department.
  - To understand policy issues and alternatives, the project team interviewed members of the Town's Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee.
  - Employee questionnaires were distributed to every employee in the Police and Fire Departments. These confidential survey instruments

- were returned to the project team's office for summary and review. The objective of these instruments was to develop an understanding of issues and to give all employees an opportunity to provide feedback.
- In order to assess the operational strengths and improvement opportunities for each department, the project team developed a set of performance measures called "best Management practices" against which to evaluate current services, workloads, staffing and service levels in the Town of Acton.

- **Providing the tools to assess current and future public safety needs.** The project team has utilized a number of methodologies and approaches to, evaluate service alternatives relating to operations. Because the characteristics of actual service demands may be somewhat different than can be foreseen at this point, the Police and Fire Departments need the tools to recreate this analysis.
- **Analyzing management systems and organizational issues.** Because this study was more than a staffing and operations study, the project team focused on formal and informal methods of communications and management within both departments, approaches to interacting with the community, policies and procedures, and the like.

The report, which follows, summarizes the results of three months of data collection and analysis. These analytical efforts provide implementation steps which the Police and Fire Departments should follow to address the improvement opportunities that will be identified in this report. The value of a formal study effort was to ensure that the current staffing, facilities, and services are as effective and efficient as possible, rather than straight-lining future staffing and facilities based on current service demand levels.

## **EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS**

## **II. RESULTS OF THE EMPLOYEE SURVEY**

The project team conducted a confidential employee survey as a critical part of the information gathering for this study. The survey was developed, and distributed to all permanent full-time and part-time staff in the Police, and Fire Departments at the beginning of the study so that results could be used in assisting in the analytical process. Once the confidential surveys were completed by employees, and returned to the project team's office they were tallied, and analyzed. The project team asked respondents to provide their input on a number of issues ranging from internal communications, day to day work issues, and the direction in which the department is headed. While there were common questions in all of the surveys, the project team also developed unique questions directed at each functional area, and the unique issues, and characteristics of the police, and fire functions.

The sections, which follow, provide a summary of the responses to the survey questions. Unless otherwise noted, the average responses are on a scale of 1 – 10 with 1 representing “strongly disagree”, and 10 representing “strongly agree” to a series of statements.

### **1. OVERALL, THE EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESPONSE RATE WAS LESS THAN 50%.**

In total, 66 surveys were distributed to the staff in the police, and fire departments. There were 27 surveys returned to the project team's offices for inclusion in the results. In the experience of the project team, response rates are generally 50% or greater. This overall response rate was not achieved in Acton, and is to a certain extent symptomatic of larger personnel issues that exist in both departments. The points below summarize the response rates for each department:

- ◆ Police Department -- 30%
- ◆ Fire Department -- 50%

### **2. A MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THAT THEIR DEPARTMENT PROVIDES A HIGH LEVEL OF SERVICE.**

The project team asked respondents to evaluate the service that their respective department provides to its various customers. With few exceptions staff members in both departments rated the overall provision of service very highly. The points, below, represent the total percentage responses which were given a rating of 8 through 10 (the highest ratings possible in the survey):

- ◆ Police Department: 75%
- ◆ Fire Department: 74%

It is clear from the responses that staff views the services, which they provide to the community quite highly.

**3. AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THAT THEIR DEPARTMENT RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES IN ACTON.**

An overwhelming majority of respondents in both departments was positive about the level of support they receive from the public. The points below summarize the total of responses from 8 to 10 on the scale:

- ◆ Police Department: 83%
- ◆ Fire Department: 89%

**4. THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE THAT CUSTOMER SERVICE IS GIVEN A HIGH PRIORITY IN THEIR DEPARTMENT.**

When asked about the level of emphasis placed on providing customer service in their department, the majority of respondents stated that customer service was a high priority in their department. The least positive responses came from the Fire Department, although more than one-half rated this focus highly. The total responses from 8 to 10 on the scale are listed below:

- ◆ Police Department: 75%
- ◆ Fire Department: 63%

In reviewing the responses to this question, it is interesting to note that although the proportion of staff giving customer services a high rating was high, a significant percentage of personnel in the Fire Department (34%) felt strongly that the department does not give high priority to customer service.

**5. RESPONDENTS WERE MIXED IN THEIR RESPONSE TO WHETHER THEIR DEPARTMENT DOES AN EFFECTIVE JOB OF KEEPING THEM INFORMED ABOUT NEW ISSUES.**

In general, respondents did not believe that their department did an adequate job of keeping them informed about new developments, issues, and problems within their respective departments. In the Police Department, 50% of the respondents were neutral, and 38% said that the department did a good job. In the Fire Department, 71% of the respondents felt that the department did a poor job of communicating to them. The responses from 8 to 10 on the scale are listed below:

- ◆ Police Department: 38%
- ◆ Fire Department: 0%

**6. RESPONDENTS WERE MIXED IN THEIR RESPONSE AS TO WHETHER THEIR DEPARTMENT DOES A GOOD JOB UTILIZING TECHNOLOGY.**

The project team asked respondents to evaluate the use of technology in their respective departments. A majority of the police respondents felt that their department does a good job utilizing technology, while a majority (68%) of the fire respondents felt that their department does a poor job utilizing technology. The totals for responses from 8 to 10 on the scale are listed, below:

- ◆ Police Department: 63%
- ◆ Fire Department: 10%

**7. STAFF MEMBERS IN BOTH DEPARTMENTS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE EFFECTIVE AT SCHEDULING AND PLANNING WORK.**

Respondents generally do not believe that their departments are doing an effective job of planning and scheduling work. Again, the apparent exception to this was the Police Department. In the Fire Department 63% of the respondents felt that the department does a poor job scheduling and planning work. The responses for each department from 8 to 10 on the scale are listed, below:

- ◆ Police Department: 38%
- ◆ Fire Department: 5%

**8. RESPONDENTS GENERALLY STATED THAT WHILE THEIR WORKLOAD IS OCCASIONALLY HEAVY THEY CAN KEEP UP WITH IT, AND COULD HANDLE MORE WORK WITHOUT BEING OVERLOADED.**

The project team asked respondents to evaluate their workload, and their ability to get work done. An overwhelming majority of respondents in both departments felt that they could get the work done. The responses for each department are listed below:

- ◆ Police Department: 100%
- ◆ Fire Department: 72%

**This response is an important one for this analysis because it appears that most staff in the police and fire departments feel that there is currently a balance between the amount of incoming work, and the time/staff to perform or accomplish it.**

**9. REACTIONS WERE VARIED WHEN STAFF WERE ASKED TO CHARACTERIZE THE MANAGEMENT OF PERSONNEL, AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THEIR DEPARTMENT.**

The project team asked respondents to evaluate the management of services provided by their department. They were asked to characterize the management of the department in a range of responses. Responses were mixed depending on the department, as summarized below:

- ◆ Police Department: 50% said they were “behind the times” or “about average, while 12 % stated that their department was “cutting edge- a leader in the area.”
- ◆ Fire Department: 50% of the respondents said that they were “better than most”, 45% said that they were “behind the times” or “about average.”

**10. STAFF REACTIONS TO DEPARTMENT AND SERVICE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS WERE MIXED, AND RESPONDENTS DID IDENTIFY AREAS WHICH MAY NEED IMPROVEMENT.**

The project team asked each department’s staff to respond to questions specific to their departmental services, programs, equipment, and operations. In general, police respondents were positive, while fire respondents were generally negative when responding to these specific questions. The sub-sections, below, provide a summary for each department:

**◆ Police Department:**

1. Response times were ranked from good to excellent by 88% of the respondents.
2. 100 % of respondents believe that the availability of backup for officer safety was between good and excellent.
3. Staff evaluation of the availability and use of proactive time (i.e. for traffic, selected enforcement, etc.) and the systems to provide guidance in these areas was mixed.
4. Follow-up by investigators, and the support provided by dispatch were evaluated as good to excellent. The staff indicated that the availability, and content of training was generally, fair to good with 75% of responses falling into these two categories.
5. Equipment, and vehicles were evaluated as good to excellent.

◆ **Fire Department**

1. Staff stated that they believed that their response times to fire, and emergency medical calls were either good or excellent.
2. However, staff also stated that their ability to effectively mount a first alarm response to a structure fire was poor—with 100% of responses falling into this category.
3. Staff evaluations were poor with respect to the quality of fire prevention, code enforcement, and emergency response and technical rescue training.
4. Staff evaluation of equipment, and vehicles was mixed with first line fire apparatus rated poor to fair, emergency medical apparatus rated good to excellent, and firefighter protective clothing rated good to excellent.
5. Staff evaluation of fire station locations was rated fair to good- 73% of responses fell into these categories.

### III. OPERATIONAL, STAFFING AND FACILITY UTILIZATION ANALYSIS

In the following sections are provided the project team's analysis of the current operations in terms of programs, services, staffing, management, and facilities of each department included within the scope of this study. The approach used in this analysis is to provide summaries of the following:

- **Current operations and services** -- this represents a brief report of current staffing and services in each department.
- **Assessment of current operations, services, and facilities** -- the project team has reviewed management and operations, which represent "best practices."  
These are based on the project team's prior work with other communities, industry standards and adjusted to reflect the specific needs and service desires of the Town of Acton.
- **Analysis of specific improvement needs** -- the analysis of each improvement need is then presented. These analyses are based on current workloads and service levels.

Each department analysis is presented as a section of this report.

**OPERATIONAL & STAFFING ANALYSIS**

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

# POLICE DEPARTMENT

## I. PATROL OPERATIONS

Patrol is often called "the backbone of the department." The patrol officers are the first responders to calls for service and who are seen by the public 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Their attitude, demeanor, efficiency, and dedication establish the reputation of the department in the community and especially among those who call upon it for service.

Police departments do not always recognize this and reward good work nor take appropriate action to remedy poor work. Unless an officer is promoted, there is little reward for their efforts. For this reason, it is important to provide patrol officers with as much variety and challenge as possible.

Opportunities to rotate in and out of specialty assignments and a good training program are essential. Members of the patrol force need to receive periodic refresher and advance training in addition to that, which is mandated by the state. They must keep abreast of the laws, court decisions, and remain proficient in self-defense, officer survival, and emergency driving. Patrol officers should be provided with good vehicles, radios, and safety equipment.

Officers must be commanded by supervisors who exude genuine pride in their department and policing and who praise when due and confront inappropriate conduct and behavior promptly and effectively. Supervisors must also be street wise, respond to scenes of arrests and major incidents, and ride with and become acquainted with their officers.

The Action Police Department consists of three Divisions: **Patrol, Investigations, and Special Services.**

## I. **PARTOL DIVISION:**

### **Schedule and Staffing**

The Uniformed Patrol Division currently consists of the patrol shifts and the "Traffic Section"

The patrol shifts work 3P-11P, 11P-7A, 7A-3P or swing shift. This is a deviation from Department Policy 41.1.6, which provides for 2400-0800, 0800-1600, and 1600-2400 shifts. Reportedly, the schedule was changed some time ago, however the policy has not been revised to reflect the change. Officers select their shifts by seniority in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement and Department Policy 41.1.6. Generally, each shift is staffed with three (3) police officers.

The "Traffic Section" consists of two officers who primarily work traffic Monday through Saturday during the hours of 7A-3P or 3P-11P. Officers "bid" for assignment to the Traffic Section. The assignment is made based on seniority.

The current patrol-staffing pattern has remained static for some time. The analyses required by department policies 16.2.7 and 16.2.8 to insure that the number of patrol officers on each shift is proportionate to the workload occurring on each shift are no longer conducted.

The department is authorized twenty-nine (29) sworn personnel. Ordinarily, seventeen (17) police officers and four (4) Sergeants are assigned to patrol. Generally, there are three (3) police officers and a sergeant on each shift except on the Sunday day shift when there are three police officers working without a sergeant.

Department policies set forth procedures for determining how to most effectively deploy patrol personnel. Policy 16.1.2 requires annual work load assessments; policy 16.1.3 requires that personnel be distributed in accordance with a work load assessment; 16.1.4 requires that the Chief of Police "annually" calculate the assignment/availability factor for Department personnel; and 16.1.6 requires an annual assessment of work load of each organizational component. The Acting Chief indicates that the department administration discontinued conducting these analyses some time ago. Most recently, the Acting Chief provided for a fourth officer to work the Sunday day shift and assigned an additional police officer as a detective. In addition, he assigned two police officers to youth/juvenile duties for part of their workweek (6 days total). These assignments were made without the benefit of the required analyses as an effort by the Acting Chief to begin a process to rid the department of "stagnation." Nevertheless, without the benefit of further analyses, the need for additional staffing on the Sunday day shift and for additional detectives is uncertain, and the possible adverse affect on patrol operations or other staffing needs of the police department overall can not be determined.

In many police departments, it requires about 1.6 officers to fill a single position on a 8 hour shift, 365 days a year, or a total of 5 officers (or 4 and overtime) to fill the same position around the clock. The actual computation depends upon the collective bargaining agreement and working conditions of the individual department, their experience with sick leave and on-the-job injuries. This is a general rule, but more definitive staffing needs can be determined by computing the assignment/availability factor and/or conducting a committed time analysis.

### Assignment/Availability Factor

We have calculated an approximate assignment/availability factor as required by Department Police 16.1.4 as follows:

Description	Hours
365 days x 8 hours (needed)	2,920
Days off, 4 and 2 shift	- 992
Vacation, average of 18 days	- 144
Sick & injury leave, average of 7 days	- 56
Training days, 10 days budgeted	- 80
Personal and miscellaneous, estimated 2	- 16
NET HOURS AVAILABLE	1,632

Dividing 2,920 hours needed by 1,632 renders an Assignment/Availability Factor of 1.79. It would therefore require  $1.79 \times 3$  or just over five (5) officers (5.37) to staff a single cruiser with one (1) officer twenty-four (24) hours a day, seven (7) days a week. To staff three (3) cruisers on a shift would require sixteen (16) officers, plus overtime. This figure varies, however, in case of unanticipated long-term injury leave and other staffing problems. However, based upon the data provided to us and *this* analysis, the existing staff of seventeen (17) police officers appears sufficient at this time.

### Committed Time Analysis

One way to determine the ideal staffing for a police department is to determine how busy the patrol force is: that is, how much time is taken up with answering complaints and calls for service as opposed to time available for preventive patrols and administrative duties.

It is generally recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police and others that no more than 1/3 of a patrol officer's time should be spent on non-discretionary, committed activities. This includes response time but not reporting writing time. This remainder (2/3) of officers' time should be available for preventive patrol, community policing activities, report writing and administrative duties, and meals. When non-discretionary time exceeds 33%, there is a need to analyze staffing patterns, evaluate officers' effectiveness, deployment strategies, equipment needs and using this information, and determine the need for additional staffing.

Using the 1999 data provided by the department, we conducted a committed time analysis as follows:

Officers scheduled to work-hours per year	1,928
Less average vacations-18 days	144
Less average sick and injury time-7 days	56
Less training time-budgeted 10 days	80
Less personal & miscellaneous days off-estimated 2 days	16
Total hours available	1,632

Total hours available per officer	1,632
17 patrol officers x 1632 = hours available	27,744
Total complaints and calls for service	13,887
Average time spent on each call 8.4 minutes = #hours	1,874

Calculation:  $\frac{\# \text{ hours of committed time } (13,887 @ 8.4)}{\text{total available officer time } (17 @ 1,632)} = \frac{1,944}{27,744} = 7\%$

It is evident that the committed (non-discretionary) time for Acton police officers is not close to the 33% acceptable rate. However, the department provided data indicating that the average time officers spent on each complaints or call for service is 8.4 minutes is at variance with national averages. These averages generally run approximately between twenty (20) and thirty (30) minutes per complaint or call for service. Therefore, using the thirty- (30) minute average, we calculated the committed time and find the following:

$\frac{\# \text{ hours of committed time } (13,887 @ 30)}{\text{total available officer time } (17 @ 1,632)} = \frac{6,943}{27,744} = 25\%$

We further calculated the committed (non-discretionary) time when the two traffic officers are eliminated from consideration. This calculation is as follows:

$\frac{\# \text{ Hours of committed time } (13887 @ 30)}{\text{Total available officer time } (15 @ 1632)} = \frac{6,943}{24,480} = 28\%$

In each case, the committed (non-discretionary) time required of an Acton Police Officer is *significantly less* than the recommended standard. Even when using the upper limits of time spent on calls and eliminating the traffic officers, Acton Police officers have 72% of their time available to perform discretionary duties. This time is available for proactive patrol, directed patrols, crime prevention, community policing, and other activities. Therefore, using the available data and the variables known to us, we find that further additional patrol staffing is not warranted at this time.

The Town is divided into four basic to patrol areas referred to as "precincts" that are identified as North, Central, West, and South. Patrol officers are responsible for

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answering complaints and calls for service and for patrol of their assigned precinct. Traffic officers patrol throughout the Town concentrating on "problem" areas. Reportedly, these precincts designations and the staffing pattern have been static for an extended period and the assessment of distribution of patrol personnel within these precincts required by Department Policy 16.2.10 has been disregarded.

### ***Recommendations:***

- 1. That the department conduct periodic analyses of its current distribution of the patrol force consistent with Department directives and make adjustments accordingly.**
- 2. That the department conduct a workload assessment of the patrol precincts consistent with Department directives and adjust the boundaries as may be necessary to assure an even distribution of workload.**

### **Supervision**

The Uniformed Patrol Division Commander (Lieutenant) oversees the patrol function. Generally, a Sergeant generally supervises each shift except on Sunday day shift when there is no sergeant, but a police officer is designated as Officer in Charge (OIC). Supervisors may vary resulting in a variance in supervision from time to time and a loss of unity of command. The number of officers assigned to the shifts varies, but are not based upon a workload assessment as required by Department Policy 16.1.2 and professionally recommended.

Sergeants report for work 20 minutes before the hour to prepare for roll call and officer report for duty on the hour. The shift going off duty remains until 20 minutes past the hour to cover for the oncoming shift during roll call. Our limited review of a roll call found a Sergeant who did an excellent job with briefing officers and making assignments.

The police cruiser is the patrol officer's office. It must be in good repair and properly equipped so that when required, an officer can promptly and properly respond to emergency and non-emergency complaints or calls for service. Customarily, police departments require that officers thoroughly check their assigned vehicles before going on patrol to insure that all emergency and safety equipment is functioning properly and that the required first aid and other emergency supplies are adequate. In addition, officers are customarily required to check the assigned vehicle for contraband that may have been discarded in the vehicle by prisoners and to check the vehicle for damage. Department Policy 41.2.12 specifies the supplies and equipment that must be contained in each police cruiser and the department has developed a form to assist officers with the checking of this equipment, for contraband and for vehicle damage. Department Rule I.8 indicates that an officer is responsible for "checking the serviceability of the vehicles assigned to his use" and that except in an emergency, the officer "shall inspect the vehicle when it is turned over to him and shall submit a written report to his Shift commander of any defects...shall also inspect the interior...for the presence of any unauthorized articles."

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Our review disclosed that personnel are not familiar with these policies and are not adhering to them.

When we inquired about this process, we were first advised that these important checks were required and that officers completed vehicle checklists, but later learned that the forms and the checks were largely abandoned. Instead, we were advised that when supplies were needed, vehicle service needed, or damage noted, officers made the notation on the board in the shift supervisors' office for the fleet maintenance officer. A further check of the process revealed that this was not entirely accurate, but that back-up supplies were available to officers who were expected to replenish them. Finally, further inquiry revealed a lack of knowledge regarding equipment and supplies required in cruisers by Policy 41.2.12 and a lack of a consistent process to check these supplies and equipment and the condition of the cruiser.

This is a serious deficiency that can result in officers arriving at emergency situations without having the appropriate and required equipment therefore not being able to properly serve the public. In addition, it could place the officer's safety at risk due to a defective vehicle or emergency warning devices or dangerous contraband discarded by one prisoner finding its way into the hands of another while being transported for detention.

### ***Recommendations:***

- 1. That the Acting Chief convene the command staff to review the department's policies, procedures, rules, and regulations and require adherence to them and**
- 2. That the Acting Chief propose revisions to the policies, procedures, rules, and regulations of the department as may be necessary.**

### **Traffic Section**

The Traffic Section of the Uniformed Patrol Division consists of two officers who are assigned based upon "bid" and seniority. The traffic officers primarily work traffic activities such as running radar and patrolling those areas where there are frequent traffic related complaints or accidents. They do not take complaints of calls for service. However, they do back-up patrol officers. They are on a 5 and 2 shift schedule and work Monday through Saturday 7A-3P or 3P-11P. After 7 p.m. when traffic is light, the on duty traffic officer "roams" or may be assigned a precinct by the on duty patrol sergeant. Using these officers to back up patrol officers and for patrol activities is a sound practice and good use of personnel resources, but to merely allow a roaming patrol is not generally productive.

These officers formally report to the Uniformed Patrol Division Commander, but receive their specific assignments from an officer on the day shift who receives a stipend for doing so. This officer electronically assigns complaints and notifies the traffic officers of

"hot spots." In addition, he oversees the enforcement action taken by the traffic officers on these complaints. This is a responsibility of the Uniformed Division Commander and the Shift Commanders and is an aberration in the unity of command and general supervision. We find no plausible reason to delegate this responsibility to a police officer on the day shift.

Reportedly, this section was established at the time when there was a proposal to hire non-sworn dispatchers for communications duties in order to relieve police officers for other duties. The premise was that the revenue that would be derived from traffic citations would be sufficient to pay for the non-sworn dispatchers. This is not a recommended practice nor has it had the expected results.

A review of the 1999 citation activity of the department reveals that the two traffic officers issue a far greater number of tickets/citations than most other patrol officers. They issued a total of 1002 citations that have derived \$66,276. in revenue

Comprehensive and contemporary directives contained in Chapter 61 of the Department Manual govern the activities of this Section. However, directives are disregarded.

Special units in a police department should be established to achieve an objective and should thereafter be carefully evaluated to insure that the objective is being met. If the reported purpose was to raise sufficient funds to compensate the salaries of four dispatchers, clearly, the established objective is not being met. Department policy 16.3.1 requires the annual evaluation of each specialized assignment to determine whether it should be continued. The department administration has discontinued these evaluations.

Nevertheless, although not stated, we presume that the objective also included the reduction of speeding through town and a reduction in the number of traffic crashes. Department statistics demonstrate a reduction in traffic crashes from 1995 through 1999 as follows:

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Traffic Crashes with injury	129	95	88	100	77
Traffic Crashes-no injury	740	838	509	535	448

These statistics seem to indicate a successful program. However, a cursory analysis questions the success using a cost/benefit analysis. Although as we pointed out, the traffic officers issue a far greater number of traffic tickets/citations than most other officers, our review suggests room for improvement. Assuming these officers work 204 days, data suggests that they issue on average three (2.5) citations per day. In addition, the creation of specialists in police department generally results in patrol officers referring or deferring that special activity to the specialists. We are unable to determine the exact extent to which this occurs in the Action Police Department, but a review of traffic citation activity is instructive. A total of 2048 citations were issued in 1999 or an average of one citation every two days per officer.

When the activity of the traffic officers is eliminated, the remaining members of the patrol force issued 1046 citations or 70 per officer for the year or an average of one (1) ticket/citation every three- (3) working days. This is especially instructive since three (3) officers issued 578 of these tickets/citations leaving the remaining 12 officers issuing an 468 or an average of 39 citations each or an average of one citation each five (5) working days. When we consider this information along with the data suggested by the committed time analysis which leaves officers with a minimum of 72% and a maximum of 93% of their patrol time to engage in these activities, the conclusion is clear. Little overall effort is being placed on the importance of traffic relating enforcement activities. Significant improvement in police officer productivity is available. Effective leadership and supervision can correct this deficiency.

Nevertheless, we find no justification for a dedicated traffic section in a department the size of Acton. Even if the traffic section were to be trained in accident reconstruction and traffic homicide investigation, its usefulness would be dubious. Officers are assigned to this section based upon a bid and seniority, therefore leaving their continued service in the section in question. For the town to make a significant investment in training and personnel resources only to be lost by a transfer, over which it has little control is not a wise investment of resources. We therefore suggest that if an accident analysis determines there is a need for a trained in accident re-constructionist or training in traffic accident homicide, that the training be included in the training plan, but that the officers so trained be assigned to perform regular patrol duties when not involved in these types of traffic accident investigations.

Rather than a traffic section, a better and more effective use of this staffing would be to augment the shifts with an overlap shift during peak activity hours. In addition, the department possesses several radar units. The traffic units indicate that they primarily run radar in stationary mode. Patrol units intermittently run radar. We suggest that all units run moving radar at all times and that directed traffic patrols be instituted to specifically detail patrol personnel for traffic enforcement activities where warranted.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 1. Eliminate the traffic section as a specialty unit and require all patrol units to become involved in traffic enforcement activities.**
- 2. Require all patrol units to run moving radar at all times.**
- 3. Establish a two officer "overlap shift" to work flexible hours during peak activity periods**
- 4. Determine the need for a traffic accident Reconstructionist and other specialty traffic training, and if warranted, include such training in the training plan.**

## **Community Policing**

The term "community policing" has taken the country by storm. Political leaders support it, citizens want it, and police attempt provide it. However, few political leaders and citizens, and not all police officials can correctly define community policing. Many who try find their definitions at odds with its fundamental premise of community involvement in the development of crime control strategies. Often, political leaders voice their support and provide funds for community policing programs, citizens voice their support for particular "programs" and police often refer to their community policing program, or their community policing unit.

However, community policing is not a program that must be federally funded; it is not a bicycle, horse, motorcycle or foot patrol that must be newly created and funded; it is not a public relations program although its implementation may result in good public relations; nor is it a program that must be conducted by a special elite unit within the police department. It is instead a philosophy of policing that includes the analysis of data and, which includes citizens who are policed in the identification of community problems and finding solutions to those problems.

The Action Police Department has received two \$25,000. federal community policing grants for overtime and the purchase of bicycles. The department has purchased five bicycles and expended considerable grant funds to train fifteen police officers in the use of bicycles on patrol. It is anticipated that these officers will patrol a new park that will open in the near future. In addition, the department has received DARE grants for overtime and supplies for the past few years.

The police department and its members operate or are involved with a number of community activities that could complement the community policing management philosophy. These include Rotary and the West Acton Businessmen's Association; First Night Program, July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration, and Octoberfest; Elderly Liaison and Crime Prevention Programs; the Citizens Police Academy and Project Alliance Drug Program.

Nevertheless, the funds and effort expended have not resulted in an internalization of the community policing philosophy into the department by basing its patrol and investigative strategies on the analysis of data and participation of residents. We suggest that it do so.

### **Recommendation:**

1. That the department more thoroughly analyze statistical data and solicit citizen input to establish a foundation for the implementation of crime prevention and control, traffic, and other police strategies

## **II. INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION**

The "Detective Division" is responsible for supporting investigative activities.

Despite the best efforts of a community to deter and prevent criminal behavior by our citizens, it is an undisputed fact that criminal behavior will occur in the best of communities. It then becomes the responsibility of the police to investigate these crimes for identifying and arresting the persons responsible and assisting in their prosecution in a court of law. These duties are the responsibility of both uniformed patrol officers and investigators.

Patrol officers are generally responsible for responding to the scene of criminal activity for conducting a thorough preliminary investigation, and when practical, for conducting the follow-up investigation in order to bring the investigation to a successful conclusion. However, when it is evident the investigation is of a complex, special, or serious nature, will be lengthy, or will take the investigating officer out of the local jurisdiction, plainclothes investigators (detectives) are generally called upon to support the efforts of uniformed patrol officers, either at the scene, or by conducting the follow up investigation.

Oftentimes, uniformed patrol officers who initially respond to such investigations are temporarily assigned to work with detectives on the follow up investigation to assist and to gain experience in such investigations.

### **Schedule and Staffing**

The Investigations Division is responsible for criminal investigations, youth/juvenile activities, and court prosecution. The Chief of Police designates personnel for assignment to the Detective Division. Five of the department's twenty-nine (29) personnel are assigned to this division on a full time basis, and two additional police officers are assigned on a part-time basis. The full time staff includes a sergeant and four police officers (detectives). The sergeant heads the division and is responsible for its overall operations. He reports directly to the chief of police. Of the four- (4) police officers (detectives) assigned on a full-time basis, two perform investigative duties, one is the court prosecutor, and one is assigned to handle youth/juvenile matters and coordinate vehicle maintenance. The two police officers assigned on a part-time basis assist the youth/juvenile officer with the DARE program and his youth activities.

The sergeant generally works Tuesday through Friday 3P-11P and Saturday 7A-3P. He meets with the detectives as a group on Tuesdays at 2:45 p.m. to review and assign cases.

One detective works Tuesday through Saturday 3P-11P and one (1) works Monday through Friday 8A-4P. These detectives perform general investigations and the night detective is responsible for the filing of fingerprints and identification photographs, and evidence control.

The court prosecutor works Monday through Friday 8A-4P. His duties require the review of arrest reports, and the preparation and prosecution of court cases, including juvenile cases. The prosecutor's workload and commitment in court is unpredictable. It is based on department caseload and court schedules and may vary from one hour per day to a full day in court.

As a practical matter, the court prosecutor, the youth/juvenile officer, and the least experienced (day) detective are without supervision.

Two (2) police officers assigned on a part-time basis. One officer is assigned to juvenile matters one day per week and the second is assigned to work on the DARE program five days each week for a total of six days per week. These assignments are recent and an effort to enhance the department juvenile activities. The Juvenile Detective also has the responsibility for fleet maintenance, which involves making minor repairs and coordinating other service and repairs with the town garage. It is estimated that this requires an average of two hours per day.

Duty in the Detective Division is considered a lateral assignment and not a rank. The Chief or Acting Chief on a subjective basis, using no specific experience, training, or other criteria selects personnel for assignment to the division. Openings are not posted to elicit interest, not is an open, formal competitive selection process utilized in the selection of officers for these assignments as required by Department Policies 16.3.2 and 16.3.3. Duty in this division is considered an assignment and not a rank. This sound administrative practice provides an opportunity for police officers to gain investigative experience that can be used advantageously when returned to uniformed patrol therefore reducing the number of cases that must be referred to investigations.

This experience is career enhancing for the individual officer, and if used advantageously, officers return to uniformed patrol with improved investigative skills. However, the assignment in Action is for an indefinite period negating this possible career-enhancing facet of this process. A two-year period is recommended for these assignments.

However, these assignments are currently for an indefinite period therefore negating the positive aspects of this procedure. Although it is that a core staff of trained and experienced detectives who have developed informational sources be maintained, it is also important that additional officers be provided with an opportunity to enhance their careers. Therefore, some detective rotation is imperative. In addition to the opportunity a rotational system provides for police officers, it also enhances the investigative ability of the patrol force when officers return to patrol duties.

It is also sound practice to reassign supervisors from time to time, as specific needs dictate. The supervisor is responsible for providing leadership, training, and guidance to newly assigned detectives as well as those on a long-term assignment. In addition, the supervisor provides direction and guidance in the handling of complex and sensitive investigations.

Nevertheless, a supervisor is a supervisor and should be able to function effectively as a supervisor of a patrol shift as well as an investigative unit. Similar to the lateral assignment of a police officer, a lateral assignment of the supervisor also provides career opportunities for other sergeants and when returned to patrol greatly strengthens the patrol force.

Though it is important to have continuity in the investigative function of a police department, some positions should be designated a rotational. This provides an opportunity for additional officers to enhance their careers and enhances the investigative ability of the patrol force when they return to patrol duties.

Detectives are required to write and/or type their own reports. There are not provided with clerical assistance. This is a shortcoming and not a good use of personnel resources. One detective spends considerable time filing identification photographs and fingerprints and each detective spends considerable time managing paperwork, preparing reports, and answering telephone inquiries that could more efficiently be performed by a skilled clerical person.

Department Policy 42.2.7 requires that the Detective Division Commander place detectives on an on call rotational list and Policy 41.2.1.C requires that the on-call detective be notified in specific circumstances. However, this is not the practice. Police officers and detectives alike are unaware of which types of incidents require the call out of detectives. Instead, they are notified when the on duty supervisor deems it appropriate. The Detective Division Commander has not placed detectives on an on call rotational list, but instead requires that all calls be directed to him and he in turn, designates the detective to be called. The sergeant prefers this system so as to keep him informed. Nevertheless, this practice limits the opportunity for detectives to gain experience and share in overtime opportunities that an ongoing rotational system provides.

If called out, a detective must proceed to Police Headquarters, pick up the needed equipment, place it in the designated vehicle, and respond to the scene of the incident. This is dysfunctional. On call detectives should be assigned a take-home vehicle so they may respond directly to incidents. Each police vehicles used by detectives should contain equipment oftentimes used by detectives. Cameras, evidence gathering equipment, and wrap around body armor should be standard so that when a detective responds to a crime scene, or to a scene with firearms involved, the proper equipment is in the vehicle and immediately available.

Ongoing specialized investigative training is limited. Although the detectives have responsibility for crime scene processing, there has been limited specialized training in this area, photography, of fingerprinting. In addition, with the advent and increased use of the automated fingerprinting identification system (AFIS) and DNA, investigative work is rapidly changing. While, there seems to be limited use of these techniques in Acton at this time, it is nevertheless important that the process of changing over to more scientific means of investigation begin. Essential to any investigation is, and will increasing be the thorough examination of a crime scene and the collection and preservation of evidence from that

crime scene. Currently, detectives are expected to perform these duties. To be effective, they must be well-trained in contemporary crime scene techniques.

The Acting Chief of Police recently assigned an additional detective to this Division with a purpose to increase the departments drug enforcement efforts. A police department that does not proactively involve itself in drug enforcement is not being responsive to reality. The only communities that do not have a drug problem worthy of attention are those who do not admit it. This is a sound move and should be supported. Informants should be sought out, undercover investigations conducted, prevention programs developed, and information provided the school and the community on the extent of the pervasiveness of the drug problem within the community.

## **Case Screening**

The Sergeant is responsible to assign and supervise case investigations, monitor caseload, and evaluate personnel. Department Policy 42.1.13 requires the establishment of a case status control system in order to maintain effective and efficient records of cases. This practice was abandoned some time ago, but most recently has been minimally established in the form of an investigative log. During our review, the investigative log indicates that during the period 10-15-99 to 1-6-2000, this division has been assigned 40 cases ranging in seriousness from suspicious activity to assault with a dangerous weapon.

In addition, there is no limitation on the number of cases assigned detectives, nor are solvability factors or other case screening criteria used as required by Department Policy 42.1.14. By using this system, cases can be more effectively assigned and using this system can increase the solution rate. The Detective Division Commander discontinued using this process.

There is no internal statistical information available to determine the solution rate of cases assigned to this division or to individual detectives and therefore to determine the effectiveness of the division or its members. However, a review of the 1998 crime report filed with the FBI by the Police Department reveals that of 359 serious crimes, 53 or 14% were cleared. The latest available FBI report indicates that this compares with the national average of 22.5 percent for similar size communities. Suffice it to say this should be improved and the adoption of professionally recommended practices such as those required by Department Policy would be a first step.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Retain a Sergeant in charge of "Investigations" and consolidate the Investigations Division with the Special Services Division.**
- 2. A core of two (2) detectives be assigned this unit who only get re-assigned on the basis of sound administrative or organization criteria.**
- 3. Additional detectives should be assigned for periods of six (6) months to one year for training and experience purposes.**
- 4. An evaluation of the workload be conducted in order to determine appropriate staffing for this unit.**
- 5. Implement case screening using solvability factors or other criteria.**
- 6. An additional secretary should be provided for this unit to maintain files, and transcribe reports.**

### **III. SPECIAL SERVICES DIVISION**

#### **Records Management**

The importance of records management within a contemporary police department cannot be overemphasized. Records are maintained to satisfy administrative, operating, fiscal and other legal requirements of a police department. It is the facts contained in these records that oftentimes determined the guilt or innocence of people or the appropriateness of police conduct. The reports and records of a police department, not individual recollections serve as its official memory and therefore should be treated accordingly.

Records management involves the systematic control of records, the periodic purging, review, and maintenance of these records. Information contained in the records system should be expeditiously available to agency personnel. It should also be available to other authorized people at a reasonable cost. Trained non-sworn staff supported by automation should be employed in the records management function to insure cost effectiveness.

A police department should have a Central Records Unit. This unit should be responsible for records and report review, control. Storage, maintenance, retrieval and destruction of records.

Control of records is crucial in a police environment to insure the integrity of the system. A control number, usually referred to as a complaint control number must identify every case or incident handled by a department. This numbering system is normally initiated by dispatch/communication. The control number is used to ensure that all reports pertaining to a single incident are filed properly and easily retrievable. All reports should be reviewed by field supervisors (Patrol/detectives) for completeness, accuracy and consistency the standards for good police reports prior to being forwarded through the chain of command to Central Records. A second review is by Central Records personnel to insure compliance with FBI and State reporting and classification requirements is advisable.

The Central Records Unit should maintain, at a minimum, a master name index of complainants, witnesses, victims, firearms and other license holders, field contacts, suspects, arrestees, or other individuals with whom the police may come in contact, a criminal history file, a criminal incident file, vehicle accident (crash) file. Only those files of the most sensitive nature such as informant and intelligence files should be decentralized, and then only the control centralized as possible such as with the Detective Commander. Records on juveniles should be separated from adult records.

Though there should be access to records 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, security measures should be in place to insure no records are lost, destroyed, misplaced. Access must be restricted to approved unit personnel. Access by computer must be carefully governed as well using passwords that must be carefully guarded. Written procedures should govern access.

Police departments cannot maximize their effectiveness without a crime analysis capability. The ability to determine crime/incident patterns by time, location, names, and other peculiar characteristics, when properly used, form the basis for the effective deployment of patrol and other personnel.

The authority and responsibilities of a records unit should be covered in written policy. Proper completion and filing of reports should be a mandatory subject of in service and roll call training, and adherence to reporting procedures should be strictly enforced.

Chapter 82 of the Acton Police Department Manual sets forth "Records" policies. These policies are contemporary and, if followed, should result in effective records management. However, the department does not consistently adhere to these policies.

The Acton Police Department does not follow a central records organizational concept by maintaining all but the most sensitive records in one location. This is in part due to the facility but also due to the lack of clerical staffing to do so. One (1) secretary who is secretary to the chief and records clerk essentially staffs the records function. She reports to the chief and to the Special Services Division Commander. She matches reports with control numbers to insure all reports are complete, sends cases designated for follow up to detectives, files, handles payroll, outside overtime, vacation, and sick and injury leave, purchase orders, processes bills, handles quarterly billing for false alarms, insurance company requests for reports, mail and correspondence, and the funds for pistol permits, commuter lots and a myriad of other clerical duties. The secretary is a five-year department employee who has been unable to take more than five leave days at any given time due to payroll responsibilities and reportedly filing is seldom up to date.

In addition, the Lieutenants, sergeants, and detectives perform a significant amount of clerical type work throughout the department. For instance, the Special Services and Uniformed Patrol Commanders share responsibilities for the firearm permitting process which is largely clerical in nature. One of the detectives handles the identification and filing of fingerprints and identification photographs that are maintained in the detective division contrary to Department Policy 82.1.2. The distribution of records keeping duties throughout the department is not a recommended practice. On the other hand, dispatchers who are involved in related records keeping functions have significant periods of down time but are not assigned to assist with clerical duties. This is not an efficient use of personnel resources. Often, police departments combine records and communications functions into one unit because of their relationship with the records and report writing process.

Much of the department records system is computerized and works relatively well. However, the system is in need of an upgrade to include the capability of officers to write their reports in the field and transmit them to police headquarters from the police cruiser. The technology to perform this function is available and the efficiencies that can be achieved are enormous. This technology enables officers in the field to be more visible to the community and more proactive.

## **Recommendations:**

1. **Establish a central records function reporting to the Special Services Division Commander wherein all records, except the most sensitive are to be retained and from which all information is retrieved. Sensitive information should be limited to on-going investigations, intelligence, and informant information.**
2. **Hire one additional clerical person and establish a central records function that reports to the Special Services Division Commander wherein all records, except the most sensitive are retained and from which all information is retrieved. Sensitive information should generally be limited to ongoing investigations, intelligence, and informant information.**
3. **Upgrade software to include field report writing capability.**

## **Property and Evidence**

The function of property and evidence control is within the Detective Division. The custody and control of evidence is the responsibility of one detective. The policies for the handling of evidence are set forth in Chapter 83 of the Department Manual. Despite the shortcoming of the facility, the detective who is responsible for evidence generally adheres to recommended practices and is conscientious about doing a good job. Although the evidence is logged into the computer system, it does not provide for bar coding.

## **Recommendation:**

1. **It is recommended that all evidence be bar coded to improve the management and accuracy of this important function.**

## **Crime Analysis and Permits**

Chapter 15, of the Department's Policy Manual provides guidance for crime analysis in the Acton Police Department that is the responsibility of the Special Services Division Commander.

The policies require collection, collation, analysis, and dissemination of the analysis of crime information to include the maintenance of target crime spot maps, and field interview, parole/probation, and known offender files. The policies require the chief to establish a Crime Analysis Problem Solving System (CAPS) and a three member Problem Analysis Advisory Committee to guide the system. The Chief is required to ensure that supervisors are familiar CAPS and that he makes an annual report to the Town Manager.

The Special Services Commander is required to brief the Chief of developing pattern and trends of crimes to assist in planning budgetary and tactical needs, and is responsible to disseminate crime information for Commanders and personnel to include documents indicating the geographical distribution of crimes such as spot maps of computer printouts.

Although we do not believe that is necessary in a department of this size to set forth a crime analysis system are complex as is proscribed for this department, we do support the necessity for crime analysis to be effective. The Acton Police Department is able to do so. It collects and maintains the necessary data to conduct these analyses for use in crime control strategies and the most efficient deployment of personnel. However, it does not do so. Instead, crime control strategies and personnel deployment is largely based on intuition and personnel preference.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. Policies of the department should be revised to reflect a more practical approach to crime analysis.**
- 2. The department should base its crime control and personnel deployment strategies on statistical analyses of crime and related factors.'**

## **Permits**

The Department is responsible for the issuance of a variety of permits the most significant being the firearm permits. Each permit holder must be renewed within the next two years. This required a considerable amount of time, which is divided between the two Lieutenants.

## **Management Information System**

The department management information system (PAMET) consists of the police records system. This is a widely recognized and excellent management information system, but it is in need of an upgrade from a DOS format to a Windows platform in order to provide the required operational support internally and in the field. The computer aided dispatch component should be upgraded as well. We have discussed in other sections of this report, the need for access to the department's data processing system from the field and the ability for officers to transmit police reports to the system from police cruisers. In addition, software to provide bar coding of evidence is a needed functional capability as well as an integrated booking system that includes the ability to process digital identification photographs.

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. The current PAMET operating system provides a significant amount of statistical analytical capability, but this should be upgraded to a windows system.**
- 2. The detectives should be provided with a printer in the detective office.**

### **Training**

The training program of a police department should be complimentary to its overall mission and each training expenditure should enhance the ability of the department to more effectively perform its mission. In addition, the training program should be career developing for its members by making each more knowledgeable, versatile, ready for advancement, and more valuable to the department. Therefore, training must be more than an expenditure of funds for officers to be away from work for an "interesting or fun" experience.

Training in the Acton Police Department is the responsibility of the Uniformed Patrol Division Commander (lieutenant). The lieutenant, along with the supervisory staff, should analyze the strengths and deficiencies of the work force and therefrom prepare an annual training plan. The plan should address the need for basic training, FTO training, roll call training, annual in-service training, and specialized training, along with cost estimates. The Lieutenant should analyze past disciplinary problems, employee accidents, and injuries, lawsuits and lost court cases in an effort to discover weaknesses in training. New employee indoctrination programs and specialized training for non-sworn personnel should be included in the training plan.

The training files should be contained on a data base that produces an individual training record for each employee. The data base should be easily searched to determine which employees have been trained in specific areas, and automatically call attention to the need for any re-certification training. An important function of roll-call training is to periodically review various general orders to insure that the employees understand them.

A master training file of in-house training should be kept that includes instructor's credentials, lesson plans, and tests.

Firearms training should include shooting under low-light levels, decision-type shooting, and shooting at moving targets. It should include instruction on the law regarding the use of force. If not the entire department, selected officers should be training with shotgun and rifles.

Although the Acting Chief has significantly increased training in recent months, the department had not formulated a training plan to assure that the training being received by officers is needed by the officers or improving the effectiveness of the Department. The Acting Chief has also requested additional training funds for the current fiscal year. If funded, this will provide for 10 days of training per officer. This is a significant commitment, but without a training plan can result in minimal benefit to the officers, the Department, and the community.

**Recommendation:**

1. **The department should immediately assess the individual training needs of officers and of the department, and prepare an annual training plan.**

## **IV. DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT (Structure and Staffing)**

### **Policies and Procedures**

The Police Department is governed by rules and regulations adopted July 1, 1988 pursuant to the authority contained in Section 97 of Chapter 41 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The rules and regulations were promulgated by the chief of police and approved by the town manager and Board of Selectmen. The International Brotherhood of Police Officers, Local 334 accepted the rules and regulations on May 26, 1988.

The administration of the department developed the rules and regulations at a time when the department was undergoing the process of becoming nationally accredited. They are well organized by Chapter and are contained in the "General Orders Manual" (Manual) along with a table of contents. *The administration has not updated the Police Department Manual since its adoption.* Therefore, there are sections of the Manual relating to specifics that are in need of updating in order to reflect existing conditions within the department. Nevertheless, the policies and procedures are comprehensive and are consistent with national accreditation standards and contemporary management practices.

The Town Manager and the Acting Police Chief agree that the rules and regulations contained in this Manual are the basis for the governance of the police department. Our review of the department does not support this contention. During our review, we found that several policies and rules contained in the Manual are largely ignored. Reportedly, new officers are not familiar nor do they have copies of the Manual.

We also found well-intentioned unilateral personnel changes being made, but without regard for the requirements of department policy. For example, a number of personnel changes have been made without the benefit of or based on the required analysis. We discuss these issues throughout the report.

In summary, we find that the existing department policies and procedures the policies are in need of minor revisions so that they reflect current specific conditions in the department i.e. shift schedules. However, the policies and procedures are generally excellent, and if followed, will serve the administration and the department well.

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. Review and revise the policies and procedures to be consistent with the practices adopted and in use by the police department.**

### **Accreditation**

enforcement. When a police department makes application to CALEA to become nationally accredited, it agrees to develop policies and procedures necessary to manage the department within the parameters of the established standards. CALEA sends a team of assessors to review the department's compliance and if found to be in compliance, awards accredited status. CALEA assessed the Acton Police Department in 1992 and found that it complied with all applicable standards. In recognition of this achievement, CALEA awarded the department accredited status and authorized the use of the official CALEA logo for five years during which time it agreed to continue to manage the department consistent with the applicable standards. The department proudly included the CALEA logo on its Police Headquarters sign where it remains as of this date.

Reportedly, the department received little recognition from the town government and the community for its achievement, and therefore lost interest in maintaining accredited status. It soon began to alter its practices and discontinue its adherence to the management standards suggested by CALEA. At the end of the five-year period, the chief of police reportedly decided not to pursue re-accreditation. Although the CALEA logo remains on the police headquarters sign, the department is not nationally accredited and is not authorized to do so. The policies and procedures developed as part of the accreditation remain in effect.

**Recommendation(s):**

1. Remove the CALEA logo from the police headquarters sign.
2. Actively seek state accreditation.

**Organizational Structure and Staffing**

The command staff of the Acton Police Department consists of the Chief of Police and three division commanders. Two division commanders hold the rank of lieutenant and one holds the rank of sergeant.

The Uniformed Patrol Division is commanded by a lieutenant and consists of the patrol shifts, the Traffic Section, and Training. 20 police personnel who work either 4 & 2 or 5 & 2 schedules staff the patrol shifts. A sergeant generally supervises each shift. The Traffic Section consists of two officers who generally work 3P-11 or 7P-3A. The Division Commander is responsible for training.

The Special Services Division Commander (Lieutenant) is ordinarily responsible for administration, internal affairs, dispatch operations, records, computer operations, and non-sworn personnel commands the Special Services Division. The Lieutenant supervises one secretary, four full time dispatchers, and one part-time dispatcher.

The Detective Division is commanded by a Sergeant and consists of Criminal Investigations, Youth/Juvenile Section, and Court Prosecution. The Sergeant supervises four detectives that include the Juvenile Officer and the Court Prosecutor.

However, the actual organizational structure and the distribution of organizational responsibilities are at variance with the official structure and responsibilities. Following the retirement of the chief of police in September 1999, the town manager appointed the special services lieutenant as acting chief of police. The acting chief of police appointed a sergeant as acting lieutenant in charge of the Special Services Divisions, but retained responsibility for the computer system and transferred responsibility for internal affairs to the Uniformed Patrol Lieutenant. This Special Services Lieutenant assists the Uniformed Patrol Division lieutenant with the firearm permitting process. In addition, he appointed an acting sergeant and assigned an additional detective and two part-time police officers to the Detective Division.

The organizational structure of a police department is important because of the power entrusted to police officers and the wide discretion they ordinarily have in carrying out their duties. In a loosely organized and minimally supervised department, it is easy for individuals to set their own agenda that may result in behavior or performance detrimental to the department and the community.

The size and complexity of the department determines the number of supervisory levels needed within the department. Beginning with the first line supervisors and generally based upon the pyramidal system, the structure is build from the bottom up. First line supervisors have a limited number of personnel reporting to them, normally 8-10 maximum. Additional levels of supervision are based upon the number of first line supervisors or the complexity of duties.

In addition, there are several organizational principles that have are accepted as basis to a solid organizational structure. We will use these principles as we make recommendations throughout this report in an effort to improve the functioning of the department.

## **Management Style and Approach:**

The chain of command within a police department constitutes a delegation of authority. The Action Chief of Police has delegated authority and responsibility for certain tasks to Division Commanders, although in a disproportionate manner. Positioned, as a Division Commander along with two lieutenants is a sergeant. Therefore, in this configuration, we find the title Division Commander problematic since Division Commanders presumably with somewhat equal authority and responsibility can be either a lieutenant or sergeant, with differing compensation. In addition, our review does not show that the Division Commanders have relatively the same authority, responsibility, and workload.

In the first instance, the Uniformed Patrol Division Commander is responsible for 18 personnel on three shifts, a two officer traffic section, internal affairs, training, and firearms permitting. The Detective Division Commander is responsible for four personnel on two shifts. The Special Services Division Commander is responsible for four dispatchers and one secretary, and assists the Uniformed Patrol Commander with firearm permitting. We find this an inappropriate distribution of authority, responsibility, and workload.

The Department should realign its organizational structure in order to delegate authority and responsibility in a more equitable manner. The elimination of the Traffic Section and incorporating traffic enforcement as a part of the patrol officer's duties will result in the Uniformed Patrol Commander responsible for training and all five shifts. In addition, the Detective Division should be consolidated into the Special Services Division as a section with a Sergeant in charge. The sergeant should report to the Special Services Commander. This will result in the Chief and the two operating divisions each headed by a Lieutenant and the Detective Sergeant reporting to a Lieutenant rather than the Police Chief.

In addition, the role of Police Prosecutor should not answer to a line sergeant who has investigative or patrol responsibilities, but instead should answer to the Special Services Lieutenant. The Uniformed Patrol Division Commander should also be relieved of his internal affairs, and firearm permitting responsibilities that should be transferred to the Special Services Commander. Ideally, training should also be the responsibility of the Special Services Division Commander; however, we do not recommend that change at this time.

## **Allocation and Deployment of Resources**

There is no established number of police officers needed to staff a municipal police department. A great deal depends upon the financial condition of the community, how much the residents are willing to spend on police services, and what level of police service they desire. The Action Police Department is authorized 29 sworn and 5 non-sworn personnel to serve a population of approximately 18,000.

A guideline often used to determine the reasonableness of staffing the number of police officers per 1000 population. The FBI calculates the average number of police officers per 1000 population in various regions of the country annually. These figures are often cited as the FBI's recommended staffing levels. Nothing could be further from the truth. The FBI is careful to cite that this is merely a mathematical calculation that must be measured against local demographics. For instance, a large, but quiet, bedroom community might have far fewer police officers per 1000 than a small community with a large shopping center or tourist attractions that require far more police officers per 1000.

The average New England community in with a population between 10,000 and 24,999 has 1.9 police officers per 1000. Using this number, Action would have 34. Officers, an increase of 5. The average number of full time police department employees per 1000 is 2.2. Using this number, Action would have 38 and increase of 4.

When considering the number of police officers needed to police the community, the presence of absence of other police agencies such as the State Police and surrounding municipal agencies and the availability of back up from them is an additional factor.

Staffing and deployment of the patrol function should take into consideration the workload of the uniformed officers and the desirable level of traffic law enforcement, preventive patrols, and other officer initiated activities.

Using dispatch records, the average time required to process a call can be determined. Using the number of calls in a given period, usually one year, one can arrive at the required time for the patrol force to handle service calls in an expeditious manner and determine those times when workloads are heaviest and the demand for increased staffing is present.

Businesses schedule and adjust their employees work schedules to meet the busy and slack times, so should the police department that served these people. An analysis of data can predict with a high degree of accuracy when the busy times will be and personnel should be scheduled accordingly. This is not the case in Acton although required by Department Policy.

Several other factors should be considered. For instance, the amount of overtime being used to replace officers on sick leave or vacation; the actual duties carried out by superior officers; the number of non-sworn department personnel; and whether sworn personnel are performing duties that could be more efficiently performed by non-sworn personnel. Another factor is the cost per-capita of the police.

### **Police Chief Selection Process**

The previous police chief of the Acton Police Department retired approximately three (3) months ago. At its current status and prospects for completion, a new Chief may not be on board until next fiscal year. The recruitment and selection of a new Police Chief

should be expedited as much as possible. This is necessary in order to enable the police department to complete the transition from a period of status quo to re-creating the Department of the future. It is also important in order to relieve the department staff of the specific uncertainty about personal promotion opportunities as well as the future of the department.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The department should be reorganized to include two divisions: Patrol Services and Support Services, each headed by a Lieutenant.**
- 2. The Detective Division should be consolidated into the Support Services Division.**
- 3. The Prosecutor be directly responsible to the Support Services Division Commander.**

## **V. COMMUNICATIONS-DISPATCH OPERATIONS**

The Acton Police Dispatch Operations is a function within the Special Services Division. The responsibilities of the police communications center are fundamental to the effective functioning of a police department. Communication specialists (dispatchers) may be the first contact a citizen has with the police department oftentimes under stressful conditions. The ability of individual communications specialists and the overall operations of the communications center set the stage for the type of police service a citizen may receive, and oftentimes sets the stage for the situation that will confront police officers when they arrive at the scene of an incident.

The communications center has the responsibility of receiving information, and accurately transmitting that information to others, of assisting citizens, managing personnel resources, and of enhancing the safety of police officers with whom they a vital link to assistance.

The recruiting, training, and retraining of competent communications specialists is every bit as important as the recruiting, training, and retaining of police officers.

### **Staffing-Activity Levels**

The Special Services Division Commander (Acting Lieutenant) is responsible for the supervision of this unit. However, dispatchers frequently interact with and receive operational orders from on duty shift commanders.

Organizationally, the communications function is in the Special Services Division. A lieutenant heads this Division. Before assuming the duties of acting chief, Lieutenant Frank Widmayer headed this Division. However, the duties are now divided between the Uniformed Patrol Division Commander and an acting lieutenant. The acting lieutenant supervises communications, however dispatchers also report to the shift sergeants who supervise operational activities.

The Communications Center is located adjacent to the headquarters lobby area and internally, adjacent to the shift commanders office. Access to the center is limited to dispatchers and others who have specific authorization and loitering is prohibited by policy 81.1.5 During our review, we found this policy largely ignored until our last visit when the door was secured.

The communications center is equipped with modern communications equipment; however, the layout of the center is inefficient. There are dual 911 answering positions and dual in-house CAD systems, but there is only one dispatch position. This severely restricts the effectively use two dispatchers during busy periods. The center also has an array of modern video, radio, and other communications equipment that is not installed in a manner to assure efficient operations. The console needs to be reconfigured for operation that is more efficient. It also needs to be upgraded to include two identically equipped dispatch positions from which a dispatcher can be fully operational. Dispatchers are in need of continual in-service training with some emphasis on interpersonal communications skills.

Chapter 81 of the Manual governs communications operations. This chapter is in need of significant revision; however, it contains several contemporary procedures that should be followed. Four (4) full-time non-sworn dispatchers and one (1) part-time dispatcher staff communications. This non-sworn personnel in this important component of the department s a wise use of personnel resources and a professionally recommended practice. However, often, dispatchers are relegated to a secondary role in a police department. This should not be the case.

Dispatchers are every bit as important as police officers to the effective functioning of a police department and the effective delivery of police services. Just as police officers should be properly trained, equipped, and paid, so should dispatchers. This is not the case here. Generally, a new dispatcher will receive 911 training, a period of training with an experienced dispatcher, and when available EMD, and other training. However, there is no structured in-service program for dispatchers and the Emergency Medical Dispatch Training Certificates for two of the four dispatchers are expired. This lack of ongoing in-service training fails to recognize the importance of dispatchers to the department.

During our review, we found that dispatchers are not familiar with the department policies governing the communications center. In addition, there was no Manual in the communications center or any policy outlining priority dispatch protocols. We were told that dispatchers rely on "common sense." Unfortunately, common sense should not be the basis for action during emergencies; instead, such action should be based on well thought out procedures and training.

Our observations determined that the dispatchers are not performing professionally or effectively. For instance, during our review we observed that dispatchers are not seated in front of the console, headset on, prepared to deal with an array of complaints and calls for police service. Instead, the chairs were rolled back against the wall and the

dispatchers were standing and walking around the center. Dispatchers do not exude professionalism and courtesy when answering the telephone and do not comply with Policy 81.2.2.H.2 that requires dispatchers to answer "Action Police Department, dispatcher' last name, you are being recorded." In addition, dispatchers do not consistently use the assigned radio call numbers as required by policy and do not comply with good radio procedures. Instead, the radio traffic is frequently on a first name basis and casual.

When the dispatchers that we observed received telephone calls, they answered the telephone located the furthest away from the radio microphone only to then walk over to the microphone to dispatch the police officer on the call. While taking the information from callers, the dispatcher was required to lean over to enter data into the CAD System or to otherwise note the substance of the call on paper to later enter in the computer. This is cumbersome and inefficient.

In addition, the noting of the substance of the call and later entering it into the CAD database results in incorrect receipt and dispatch times being incorrect in the official record. It is also contrary to Department Policy #81.2.2.I.1 which requires the logging of the "location, nature or activity, call back number, name of reporting party or police unit responding, and the time initiated" upon receipt of the complaint or call for service.

During our observations, the activity of the dispatch center varied. Certainly there were times when the dispatcher was extremely busy, but for the most part, there was little or moderate activity. Dispatchers do not have an array of ancillary duties that are often assigned dispatchers in departments of this size. We therefore conclude that with additional training, better procedures, and the upgrading and reconfiguration of the console, the current staffing can handle a significantly increased workload. Nevertheless, we recognize that there are times that the demands placed upon dispatchers will be beyond their capacity even with the suggested improvements. Therefore, the importance of periodic workload assessments cannot be overemphasized. These assessments can determine with a high degree of accuracy where selective additional staffing is needed and staffing adjustments should be made accordingly.

### **Consolidating Opportunity**

We further see this as an opportunity to pursue the concept of a consolidated public safety communications center that dispatches for police, fire, and EMS. The combining of police, fire, and emergency medical communications within one public safety communications center is a sound procedure and an effective use of personnel, and more recently technology. Such an organization provides an opportunity to maximize personnel resources and high-tech communications equipment, and to better coordinate public safety activities.

However, such an organization also poses additional administrative responsibilities to insure that the center is staffed with highly qualified personnel, that personnel be provided proper

leadership, policy, direction, and training, that up to date equipment be provided, that appropriate and secure facilities be provided.

Such a center should operationally be under the control of the police department due to the comparative volume of calls and the sensitive nature of many of those calls. A sworn police supervisor should command the center and there should be a communications liaison officer in the fire department that works closely with the Communications Commander to insure collaborative and efficient operation.

Such a consolidation will clearly justify the need for additional communications personnel, but will free firefighters who are not properly trained in communications techniques to perform those duties for which they are trained. A second dispatcher will be required during the day and evening shifts and during special events.

An effective means of deploying police personnel during busy periods of when demands for service outstrip available resources is to use a predetermined deployment method of differential police response (DPR), and it is recommended that such a system of deployment be developed for the Town of Acton.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1. The dispatchers be immediately re-certified in Emergency Medical Dispatch and that ongoing in-service training be part of the annual training plan that includes telephone and radio procedures and courtesy.**
- 2. The console be reconfigured to be more efficient, and that it include two identically equipped dispatch positions.**
- 3. Dispatchers be provided with headsets and that they be required to sit at the console, be prepared and ready to receive and dispatch calls, and present a businesslike appearance.**
- 4. Priority dispatching and other procedures be developed for the guidance of dispatchers and the dispatchers are appropriately trained in those procedures.**

## **VI. POLICE FACILITY and EQUIPMENT**

### **Police Facility**

The existing police facility was constructed in 1967 and is ideally located in the geographically center of the Town on approximately 6 acres of land on Route 27 just off Route 2 to Boston. However, the facility is outmoded and dysfunctional. With the exception of the lobby and the communications center, virtually every section of the facility is poor from an aesthetic and functional perspective. This condition negatively affects the work and morale of each employee.

Officers are cramped, files are located in hallways, detective lack interview rooms, the space provided for roll call and training is in the basement and deplorable, there are no locker and shower facilities for department personnel, and the holding cells are not suitable. All sergeants share one small office, the women's locker room was formerly a report writing room, and before than a juvenile detention room and the roll call room was formerly the firing range. There is little doubt, even to the inexperienced police professional, that the facility must undergo major renovations or replacement.

As we previously stated, it is currently ideally located in the geographical center of the Town. However, the specific location of the police facility is not a major concern. Police patrols, for the most part, work in the field and therefore response time is not seriously affected by the location of the facility. It is important, however, that a police facility be at a location convenient to the public.

In addition, it makes little difference whether the facility is a stand-alone facility or a combined facility with the fire department. There are some economical advantages of a combined facility. For instance, the sharing of conference and training rooms and even a physical fitness center can be accommodated. In addition, a combined communications center can be included as part of the complex. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize the importance of identity to police and fire personnel and the design of a combined facility should accommodate this factor.

We have sought preliminary information regarding space needs of a department this size and based on our preliminary information, we suggest that from 18,000-23000 square feet of space is required for a stand-alone facility.

### **Equipment and Vehicles**

The Police Department is equipped with the basic equipment to perform its job in a safe and effective manner. In general, the equipment is in need of updating. For example, the bookkeeping process should include digital photographs and inkless fingerprints that are integrated into the automated management information system. Sufficient computer terminals and printers should be provided and conveniently located throughout the facility in appropriate work areas. Criminal investigators have the basic equipment required but here again, equipment such as lab equipment, digital, and video cameras is in need of updating.

The department is assigned thirteen (13) vehicles. The vehicles are well maintained by the Department of Public Works. Mileage on these vehicles ranges from 12,500 to 82,000 (11/16/99). Vehicles are replaced on a rotating 3-3-2 schedule. At present the department has three (3) unmarked vehicles. They are used by detectives, when officers attend schools and for other administrative purposes. Therefore, often times, no unmarked vehicles are available for police use.

## **Recommendation:**

- 1. The Town should proceed ahead with the construction of a new police facility.**
- 2. This facility should contain dispatch services for both the police and fire and EMS functions.**
- 3. The town should explore the possibility of constructing a combined police and fire facility located at the current police station site.**
- 4. A department capital equipment plan should be prepared reflecting the equipment needs of the department for a 5-year period to update or replace outmoded equipment and to acquire new, state-of-the-art equipment.**
- 5. The department should consider retaining another vehicle at the next time of rotation or change the policy governing use of unmarked vehicles for non-police purposes to alleviate this problem.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Acton Police Department consists of many talented and ambitious police officers. However, the department is not realizing the potential of these officers due primarily to a lack of vision and leadership.

The department is not being managed on a regular basis in accordance with its own directives, which were in large part found to be contemporary and consistent with generally accepted police practices. Personnel deployment has often been managed based on what appears to intuition rather than analysis of activity levels or with a planned objective in mind.

The general disregard of policies and procedures leaves personnel without proper guidance and parameters within which they must operate. Sick and injury leave is reportedly at an average of seven (7) days per employee per year. Research has indicated that an employee with six (6) or more days of sick leave per year is often considered chronically ill. Employees do not appear to be chronically ill, therefore, one can reasonably conclude that this situation is due to the internal culture that manifests itself through lax discipline, poor work attitudes, and habits.

The best overall description of the Acton Police Department is "status quo." The department is in need of strong, effective management to enable this department to function as a highly skilled, efficient operation.

**OPERATIONAL & STAFFING ANALYSIS**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

# **FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Acton Fire Department is a full service fire/rescue organization. The department serves 19,000 customers in a 21 square mile area. The department employs forty-two (42) full time sworn personnel and one (1) full time secretary. The department also has two (2) on-call firefighters and numerous auxiliary firefighters who also are members of the town's Emergency Management Agency. Please see the enclosed organizational chart for further details.

Personnel and apparatus are dispatched from three (3) fire stations in the community. Survey results coupled with employee interviews and site visits find strengths and areas that need to be improved. Some areas of needed improvement will have cost impact and other needed improvements will be accomplished as district stations. The department responded to 7,235 units of activity in 1999 broken into calls for service (4,108), and in-service activities (3,127). There were 409 Advanced Life Support (ALS) calls in 1999 of which 199 were billable calls.

An employee survey was conducted as part of the study. Survey results coupled with employee interviews provided the consultants with a picture of the fire department that can best be described as an organization that has significant potential, but has significant organizational needs that require immediate attention.

## **II. EMERGENCY SERVICES DIVISION (OPERATION and MANAGEMENT)**

### **COMMAND**

The overall command of the Acton Fire Department lies with the Chief of Department. Second in command of the organization is the Deputy Fire Chief who also manages the Fire Prevention program. Assisting in the Administrative Division is the Fire Department's Secretary. The Fire Chief is not a "strong" chief nor a "weak" chief, but a "charter" chief who reports to the Town Manager. The organization flows from the Administration Division to the Emergency Services Division, which is made up of a Captain, Lieutenants, and Firefighters. The physical layout of the Administrative Division housed on the second floor of Station 3, headquarters does not lend itself to a good management structure or flow of work. The Deputy Chief, Shift Commander and Secretary are located at one end of the building and the Chief is located at the other end. The workstation of the Secretary creates a negative image to citizen customers as the Shift Commander's bed is directly behind the Secretary's workstation. The Secretary is the last contact by citizens upon entering headquarters and should be no more than the second contact. There is no administrative conference room where staff meetings could be held. During examination of documents provided, very few Standard Operating

Guidelines were found. Telephonic communications were found to be out dated and not conducive to the provision of efficient internal and external operations as well as good customer service.

The current command structure is standard for a Fire Department and is proper for the size of the community and department that we are examining. The Shift Commander is assigned a vehicle in order to facilitate the monitoring of the department's human resources and equipment located at various stations and to command incidents in their initial stages until relieved by a higher-ranking officer.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **The Chief must become more assertive in the management of the organization.**
2. **Weekly staff meetings of the Administrative Division should be conducted to keep all members of the division informed which will establish a team oriented management style. It is optional to include the on-duty Shift Commander.**
3. **The dormitory space for the Shift Commander should be partitioned off to create a separation from the Secretary's workstation. This should be accomplished immediately.**
4. **At least two more telephone lines should be added at headquarters to improve effectiveness and quality customer service: one (1) for Fire Administration, and one (1) for Fire Prevention.**
5. **A Task Force should be initiated to evaluate the second floor layout with the potential remodeling of the second floor to create a more professional appearance and a better workflow.**
6. **In conjunction with #5, the Secretary's workstation should be relocated to greet customers when they arrive in the Administrative Division, as well as the ready room for shift personnel.**
7. **An internal Task Force should be assigned the task of evaluating the current S.O.P.'s for updating and evaluate the myriad of notices and orders to create additional policies to guide the daily operation of the department.**
8. **The duties and responsibilities of the department's secretarial position should be re-evaluated to include the scheduling of the Deputy's appointment for inspections and meetings.**

## **STAFFING**

The staffing level for each group is ten (10) consisting of one (1) Captain, (Shift Commander), one (1) Lieutenant, and eight (8) Firefighters. All three- (3) stations are staffed on a 24/7 basis with personnel working a 42-hour average workweek using the schedule of ten-hour days and fourteen-hour nights.

One (1) firefighter is assigned fire alarm duties thus reducing the on-duty staff available for emergency response to nine. Staff members indicated a concern regarding staffing levels of the department. A significant problem as it pertains to staffing levels of the department is the excessive amount of sick leave that is being taken. Using the standard of a sick day equating to 12 hours, the following is noted: In fiscal 1999, the heaviest user took 37.7 sick days. Seven employees used between 20 and 37.7 days of sick leave representing 2,349 hours of lost productivity. An additional 16 personnel used between 10 and 20 days of sick leave representing 2,810 hours of lost productivity. Twenty-one (21) employees used between zero (0) and nine (9) days of sick leave representing 1,084 hours of lost productivity. Total hours used amount to 6,243 hours of lost productivity. *Using the 42-hour week period for fire fighting personnel, the total sick leave hours used represents a loss equivalent to 2.85 firefighters for the entire year.* This level of sick leave used is unacceptable.

## **SAFETY**

Safety is an attitude and a philosophy intended to produce a safe workplace environment and safe emergency scene practices. Certain unsafe conditions were noted in the facilities section with recommendations. The protective clothing and helmets appeared in generally good condition upon inspection. Fire apparatus is equipped with seat belts and no one rides the back step. An Incident Command Policy exists, *but the policy is not being used nor enforced on a regular or consistent basis.*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The protective clothing replacement program is ongoing with a number of sets replaced each year. This program should continue and fire-fighting personnel should be updated on the proper care and maintenance of their protective clothing.**
- 2. A seat belt policy should be implemented to ensure mandatory use.**
- 3. A backing-up policy should be developed to ensure safe backing-up practices. The Incident Command Policy must be used on all multi-company incidents except the most basic ambulance/engine Medical Emergency, and if that example escalates, the system is initiated. When the Incident Command System is consistently used on the routine, it becomes routine at the critical incident.**
- 4. A Safety Committee should be established and should meet on a regular basis. The committee should collaborate with Fire Administration in developing safe practices ensuring that policies pertaining to safety become a commitment. The committee should review injuries and accidents with recommendations made to Fire Administration.**
- 5. An internal Task Force consisting of management and rank and file personnel should be established to research and draft a policy for an Accountability System to track personnel at the incident scene.**

## **INSPECTION SERVICES**

Inspection services are provided by the fire department in several areas. The Shift Commanders and Company Personnel conduct smoke detector certification inspections (26F) pertaining to the purchase and sale of homes. The Shift Commanders, the part-time inspector, and the Deputy Fire Chief handle code enforcement inspections and response to complaints. Currently, there are *no* regular inspections being conducted of business establishments by district.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Provide inspector training for shift personnel via the National Fire Academy "hand off" program. This will increase the proficiency of shift personnel and add value to the organization.**
- 2. Develop a Company Inspection Program via the fire districts in the community. This type of inspection program puts company personnel in the field. Knowledge will be gained about the businesses inspected such as, location of utilities, where the shut offs are located, are there hazardous materials stored on the premises, what type of business is it, how many shifts operate at the business, are there significant life safety risks to be encountered if there is an emergency at the site. During an inspection, a hazard or code violation may be uncovered in its early stage, preventing an emergency at a later date.**
- 3. Decentralize the inspection program as much as possible using the Deputy Fire Chief as the overall coordinator of the program.**

## **MUTUAL AID**

Mutual Aid including line boxes in the Fire Service is one of the oldest forms of regionalization in Municipal Government. Budget constraints in the large grouping of suburban fire & Rescue organizations in the Commonwealth prevent all departments procuring every type of equipment or apparatus needed, hence, Mutual Aid. The Acton Fire Department is part of district mutual aid network established by agreement with all appropriate communities. The mutual aid agreements have not been reviewed and upgraded in some time. There are only a few "line box" agreements in place at the current time. Line boxes are a type of mutual aid that is automatic instead of requested and are placed at locations that are considered to potentially "high risk" areas.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Review and update formal mutual agreements.**
- 2. Due to the growth of the community, it is recommended that Line box assignments should be reviewed and updated adding assignments if necessary. Line boxes are a type of mutual aid that is automatic instead of requested. An example would be a manufacturing complex that is fairly**

- close to the town line that would automatically receive an engine or ladder company from the adjacent town on a box alarm assignment.
3. **Hold running card assignments to five (5) alarms and above the fifth alarm utilize the State Fire Mobilization Plan. Running cards are pre-programmed response assignments. The response criteria are distributed to all participating communities.**

### **III. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

#### **DEPLOYMENT**

Emergency Medical Services are delivered by the Acton Fire Department at the Basic Life Support, (B.L.S.) level with Advanced Life Support, (A.L.S.) services provided by Emerson Hospital via intercept procedures on an as needed basis. As stated previously, in 1999 there were 409 Advanced Life Support calls for service of which 199 were actual billable calls.

The standard emergency medical service (EMS) response to a medical emergency is the ambulance, an engine company, Shift Commander and an A.L.S. unit if necessary. During this study, a substantiating reason or value has not been identified for the Shift Commander to automatically respond to daily medical emergencies. With a response of the ambulance and an engine, it is response of a minimum of four personnel from the Acton Fire Department, plus two (2) from A.L.S. for a total of six (6) personnel. If additional resources are needed, then the incident is expanding beyond the scope of a standard medical emergency and additional personnel should be summoned.

*Example:* A motor vehicle accident with entrapment, three (3) injuries, and a vehicle leaking fluids. This would mandate the response of multiple ambulances, an engine company, special hazards with the Jaws of Life and other rescue tools, the Shift Commander and an A.L.S. unit with the mandatory use of the Incident Command System. The need is illustrated in the example for a Shift Commander to respond as opposed to a report of a fall on the ice with a possible broken arm.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Maintain a standard Medical Emergency response of the ambulance and the closest Engine Company.**
2. **Delete the response of the Shift Commander unless the scope of the incident exceeds the response capability of the ambulance and engine. The Shift Commander now has additional time to assign other activities to a Command Officer.**
3. **The Chief of Department and the Deputy Fire Chief should not be required to maintain E.M.T. status. As members of the Fire Department, they are required to be First Responders.**

## **E.M.S. BILLING**

A third party currently does the billing for E.M.S. from information received from the Fire Department. The collection rate is between 80-85%. The Town is currently paying a flat collection rate of \$14.40 per bill collected.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The Fire Department must develop procedures to transmit billing data in a more timely and consistent manner in accordance with other town billing activities.**
- 2. The Town should issue a Request for Proposal regarding the provision of collection services for the Ambulance billing as well as other municipal collection services. The Town should consider a percentage (%) method of payment to encourage the third party to collect a higher percentage of bills.**

## **IV. SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

There is a serious shortfall in the record keeping function in the Emergency Services Division. Primarily due to outmoded technology in the Communications Division, Shift Commanders must manually maintain a daily log of shift activities. In addition, there are no Company Reports completed for emergency incidents, which the department responds.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The Fire Department should immediately implement an incident reporting system for all companies responding to all emergency incidents. Incidents must be documented by reports to record activities of the company, equipment used, any injuries noted and for post incident critique purposes. Documentation is also required for any future legal aspects of the incident.**
- 2. Computer technology within the department should be improved immediately in order to meet primary support service objectives of record keeping, documentation, and data management as well as operational service analysis and related facility, equipment, and manpower planning. The current operating software (PAMET) is a DOS based system that unlike a windows based operating system does not provide for timely and effective management of data that is vital to the operational effectiveness of the Fire Department.**

## **APPARATUS REPLACEMENT AND MAINTENANCE**

The department to forecast and budget for apparatus replacement uses a five- (5) year capital improvement plan. Currently, one (1) command vehicle is a year behind its regular replacement schedule, and an engine company is one (1) year behind its scheduled replacement. The ladder truck was four (4) years behind its scheduled replacement when a new one was procured. To keep deferring replacement of first line units increases the cost when replacement occurs and apparatus is maintained in a first line status longer that is practical and safe.

Shift personnel perform the current first line maintenance of apparatus and equipment. Shop personnel at the town's highway department perform repairs of vehicles and routine maintenance. A shift commander coordinates maintenance records and has the responsibility to coordinate the scheduling of repairs with the highway department. Apparatus has preventive maintenance checks performed on a weekly basis and the appropriate forms are submitted to the coordinating shift commander. Department staff checks radios on a daily basis.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The current process of all maintenance problems being channeled to one shift commander should be discontinued. This process should be decentralized and assigned to all four (4) shift commanders for daily notification to and coordination with the Highway Department.**
- 2. The maintenance service provided by the Highway Department of the Town was found to be of a very high quality. Service is being provided in a timely, and cost effective manner. Highway Department personnel assigned to work on fire apparatus and support units should be encouraged to become certified to repair and maintain emergency apparatus through available channels. This would eliminate the necessity to send out vehicles for more extensive repair work.**
- 3. Through its normal recruiting procedures, the Fire Department should recruit and employ at least one Firefighter/E.M.T./Mechanic to enhance the maintenance program in the Fire Department.**

## **V. FIRE STATION LOCATION AND APPARATUS DEPLOYMENT**

The location of fire protection facilities and the deployment abilities of emergency units and personnel housed in those facilities are paramount to providing adequate protection to the community. Fire stations have an anticipated useful life of 50 to 75 years, depending upon the growth patterns of the community. Community boundaries are well defined with virtually no potential for any growth by annexation. Therefore, the siting of new facilities is important from the ISO perspective for fire defense grading purposes, availability of land, preferably already municipal owned, neighborhood impact, and

traffic. The three current facilities have been traditionally identified as "district stations". They were built in 1951, 1958, and 1961 for the protection needs and technology of that era. Population growth, shifts, and "mission creep" all are factors that may influence siting of new facilities. The consulting team considered the option of a fourth station and found that there no operational basis to support this option.

## **FIRE STATION FACILITIES OPTIONS**

1. **Option number one (1):** no change from the current public facility configuration.
2. **Option number two (2):** construct a new Police Station with no change in fire protection facilities.
3. **Option number three (3):** construct a new Public Safety Facility, including Fire, Police, Emergency Communications and Emergency Management. This option would also include a new Fire sub-station being built further towards the northwest section of town, which is the fastest growing section of town. It has become increasingly common place for communities to incorporate more than one public safety division into a new fire station creating a neighborhood complex effect. Those could include facilities such as a sub-station for the Police Department, a branch library or branch recreation facility. If the two (2) station option were to be developed, it is recommended that one (1) of the three (3) current stations be retained by the Fire Department. It is recommended that this facility be remodeled and up-dated to house a reserve pumper that could be staffed by recall personnel reporting back to duty for significant incidents or any type of storm coverage. That facility could also house the equipment assigned to the Acton Emergency Management Agency, thus housing two agencies in one structure then freeing up three other municipal buildings for the use. If one of current facilities were retained under this option, it would be un-staffed except in extraordinary circumstances.
4. **Option four (4):** would have the entire town served from one (1) joint public safety facility with one (1) existing fire station retained in a non-staffed mode, similar to option three.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Why do anything....if the three current stations were to be retained and remain in-service, they would need to be enlarged and remodeled to a significant degree. The lots that the current facilities sit on do not lend themselves to that type of restructuring.

It is recommended that **Option 3** be adopted by the Board of Selectmen to construct a new public safety facility and a new Fire sub-station, maintaining one of the existing facilities in a non-staffed mode as previously described. This option addresses the capital needs and concerns of the current Fire and Police Departments. It would put the joint public safety facility in a reasonably central location, at the site of the current police facility, for emergency response and customer service utilizing primary roadways in the

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community and would get both the Fire Department and Police Department out of buildings that have served a useful life but are now out dated for the current and future missions of both departments. These locations would enable the Town to provide fire station locations that will adequately serve the community for years to come. This option would enhance the Emergency Communications function by establishing central dispatch with a rapid and efficient dispatch of both public safety departments and enhance the team concept. There appears to be suitable town-owned property to construct both facilities and the town would also benefit from the shared areas and functions in the facility, including central dispatch, (staffed by civilians), wellness facility, master conference, training and community rooms, utilities and parking.

It is estimated that approximately 40,000 square feet will be required for a fire and police shared facility including walls and circulation. An estimated construction cost of \$148 per square foot would result in an estimated cost of \$ 6 million.

The estimated cost of a stand alone fire facility (9,800 square feet) at \$140 per square foot would be approximately \$1,372,000.

## **FACILITY PROFILE**

**FIRE STATION ONE:** This facility was built in 1951 and sits on 1.08 acres of land. Full strength staffing includes a Lieutenant and three Firefighters. The station houses the following apparatus:

Rescue 33, a 1997 E-One ambulance on a Freightliner chassis  
Engine 22, a 1988 Ford/E-One 1250 pumper  
Reserve Engine 23, a 1977 Hendrickson 1250 pumper, reconditioned 1988  
Car 33, the Fire Alarm Maintenance truck

This station has three (3) apparatus stalls; the center stall is double entry. This station has a critical traffic safety problem upon leaving the station for any reason and turning left. All wooden overhead doors need to be replaced with lighter weight insulated doors that comply with federal safety standards including the beam device that prevents the door from closing if the beam is broken. The kitchen needs to be updated and the apparatus floor needs to be enlarged if the station is to remain in-service. The facility needs to be brought in full A.D.A. compliance.

**FIRE STATION TWO:** This facility was built in 1961 and sits on 1.5 acres of land. It is staffed with two (2) firefighters and houses the following apparatus:

Engine 26, a Ford/E-One 1250 pumper  
Ladder 28, a 1993 Smeal quint with a 105' aerial and a 1500 G.P.M. pump

This station has two (2) apparatus stalls and both are double entry. The apparatus floor is in need of repair from deterioration of an old under floor heating system. The station has an emergency generator, but is not an automatic start if there is a power failure. The wooden overhead doors need to be replaced with lighter weight insulated doors that comply with federal safety standards including the beam device that prevents the door from being closed if the beam is broken. The kitchen needs to be updated with new cabinetry. The second floor is underutilized when compared to the other two stations. The rear wall could be "bumped out" to create a full second floor to establish a new home for the Administrative Division as an option. Weatherproofing needs to be done to the building for energy conservation.

**FIRE STATION THREE:** This facility was built in 1958 and sits on 1.25 acres of land.

This station is staffed at full strength with a Captain and three (3) Firefighters. The station houses the following apparatus:

Engine 24, 1988 E-One Pumper  
Reserve Engine 21, a 1975 Maxim 1000 G.P.M. pumper, (reconditioned 1993)  
SH-29, a 1986 Chevrolet Special Hazards Unit  
Car 31, a 1995 Ford Crown Victoria assigned to the Deputy Fire Chief

Car 30, a 1994 Chevrolet Blazer assigned to the Shift Commander  
C-1, a 1992 Crown Victoria assigned to the Chief  
MI-, a 1995 Zodiac Rescue Craft  
1995 Boat Trailer

This facility houses the Emergency Services Division personnel as well as the Administrative Division consisting of the Chief of Department, Deputy Fire Chief, and the Fire Department Secretary. The apparatus floor needs repair due to deterioration from an old under floor heating system. The wooden overhead doors need to be replaced with new lightweight insulated doors that comply with Federal safety standards including the beam device that prevents the door from being closed if the beam is broken. The apparatus stalls are overcrowded to the extent that no passageway exists between the special hazards unit, rescue craft, and reserve engine. This is neither safe nor efficient and is not conducive to preventive maintenance functions.

The second floor, which houses the Administrative Division and staff living quarters, is laid out very poorly and needs immediate attention. The floor plan does not lend itself to efficient communications and flow of work. The secretary and the Deputy Chief are on one end of the building and the Chief is on the other end. The secretary is the last citizen contact when entering the Administrative Division and should be the first. There is no conference room where staff meeting or conferences with citizens could be conducted. The workstation of the secretary creates a negative image to citizen customers as the shift commander's bed is directly behind the secretary's work station. An immediate remedy of that situation should be undertaken by the use of temporary office panels by order of the Chief. The kitchen needs to be updated and there is potential for expansion of the second floor. All stations need to be brought into full ADA Compliance.

## **VI. COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Communications Function**

Both dispatch and radio are currently achieved by a Firefighter on shift assigned to the "desk". The Fire Department formally had dedicated dispatchers, but through a RIF, they were laid off and have not been replaced. The concept of having a firefighter on the desk is not cost effective from an hourly wage and responsibility perspective and removes a firefighter from availability to deliver emergency services and the varied support functions

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The town should use civilian dispatchers in the Fire Department. This will have an immediate positive operational impact in the Emergency Services Division by freeing four (4) firefighter/dispatchers to dedicate their time to the provision of emergency services and support functions. This will aid in efforts to comply with the 2 in 2 out standard on the fire ground.**

2. **That standard requires two fire-fighting personnel to be on the exterior for rescue capabilities before a two-person entry advancing an attack line to the interior of the structure.**
3. **Whenever a public safety facility is constructed, that civilian dispatcher would meld into the joint communications operation.**
4. **The department should be provided sufficient funds to obtain portable radios to equip all firefighters with their own portable radio. The department currently has 16 UHF portable radios that are the Motorola HT1000 model. They are awaiting delivery of a current order of nine (9) additional radios. This would require the purchase of 17 additional radios. At \$800 per radio, that represents an investment of \$13,600 in operational safety that is the prevailing criteria for the individual assignment of portable radios.**

### **CENTRAL DISPATCH**

Central dispatch, properly administered and supervised is a tremendous tool for the dispatch and coordination of public safety resources from the most basic response to a major incident involving multiple agencies and multiple jurisdictions utilizing the concepts of unified command. Staffing levels of the civilian dispatchers to be determined by the average workload of both departments.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. The communications center should be a secure facility in a neutral zone in the public safety facility. By siting it at the rear of the lobby in a public safety facility, dispatchers also function as the first customer service contact to greet customers and provide directions when necessary. Bulletproof glass and walls provide security.**
- 2. The responsibility of the Police and Fire Chiefs would be to ensure that up-to-date department procedures and protocols for both departments are in the possession of the dispatchers for smooth center operations and service delivery. Regular meeting with the supervising dispatcher will enhance the operations and the teamwork concept.**
- 3. Supervision of the center should be the responsibility of the supervising dispatcher. That person not only has the responsibility of supervision, but is also liaison between the dispatchers and both departments.**

## **VII. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

Emergency Management is the title and function that replaces what was known as Civilian Defense. Rather than preparing for the "big one", the focus is now on storm and hazard preparedness. A major responsibility is the continual updating of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and certification of the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) to ensure eligibility for federal funds in case of a disaster.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. After certain management deficiencies as stated in this report are addressed in the Fire Department it is recommended that the Fire Chief be named the Acton Emergency Management Agency Director. This is a natural flow in many communities in the Commonwealth. Emergency events that are responded to and managed by the Fire Department are events that supported by both MEMA and FEMA if necessary. The support functions available to Fire Departments such as the State Fire Mobilization Plan are supported by MEMA.**
- 2. Without responsibility for the Emergency Management Agency, the Fire Department should not be responsible for the updating of the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. That is a time consuming comprehensive undertaking that requires considerable teamwork, research, and community contacts.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Acton Fire Department is a full service municipal fire and rescue organization. It is basically a good organization that has the opportunity to become an excellent organization. The results of the employee survey were quite frank and laid it on the line in several areas. There is frustration within the rank and file with both Fire Administration and the Town Administration. This is all right as long as members of the department are willing to be part of the solution and are willing to take part in maintaining current strengths and teaming with Fire Administration to address weaknesses and build them into strength. Fire Administration must become more aggressive in the overall management of the department and establish team-building processes that tap the expertise of individuals. The rank and file is concerned about staffing levels. Those staffing levels are critically impacted by the absolute excessive use of sick leave.

The message must get through that sick leave is not a benefit, right or privilege, but in fact is an insurance policy for non-service connected disability whether through sickness or injury. Fire administration must keep staff apprised of events through regular meetings and notices.

The Incident Command System is one of the most effective management tools available to fire departments. It eliminates freelancing and promotes safety through incident management and accountability. When it is consistently used on the routine, it becomes routine and critical.

There have been concerns expressed regarding the lack of technology within the department and those concerns are well founded. The telephone system and the current computers are excellent examples. The facilities are in dire need of repair and refurbishing. Whatever direction the town takes regarding new facilities will work to resolve that issue. There are certain situations identified in this report that must have immediate attention. Response strategies need to be re-evaluated to deploy the appropriate human resources to the emergency incident. Civilian dispatchers are essential to putting four (4) firefighters back on line to improve the fire department's emergency response capability.

The Fire Department needs to broaden employee "buy in" to the programs and activities and develop a management approach that supports this – after the fact. A basic participatory or team management approach can facilitate this once a long-range plan is developed in the strategic planning process and goals/objectives prioritized for individuals and the department. Specific assignments should be developed for all department personnel. The following approach could be taken which increases involvement in departmental management while minimizing overtime:

- Designate shift and station responsibilities for specific management items (e.g. training, apparatus replacement, EMS review, department policy review etc.).

- Have Captains and Firefighters work in teams to research and develop operation or program alternatives.
- Support these "committees" by committing to implement findings, conclusions and recommendations within budgetary constraints.
- Develop accountability mechanisms and communication measures to monitor these activities for all departmental personnel.

A management-training program needs to be developed and available for all command staff and including specific required topics and time commitments.

Approaches to managing the Department needs to be re-evaluated to increase the buy-in to the concept of change. Many departments have increased the chances of success of change if all employees are brought into solving the problems and made to feel a part of the solution.

As stated in the report, the Town needs to make some changes to its current facilities in order to maintain operational effectiveness. It is the opinion of the consultants that two (2) stations: one a combined facility (police and fire) with centralized, civilian dispatch and the other station located in the northerly section of town as an unmanned station.

It is estimated that a combined police and fire facility depending upon the square footage and configuration (number of fire apparatus, training areas etc) may cost as much \$ 6 million. A general square footage cost for a public safety facility is approximately \$148 per square foot.

## **ADDENDUM**

**TOWN OF ACTON**  
**POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT**  
**SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS**

**I. PATROL OPERATIONS**

- A. That the department conduct periodic analysis of its current distribution of the patrol force consistent with Department directives and make adjustments accordingly. This analysis should include a workload assessment of the patrol precincts and boundaries of patrol areas. The patrol precincts should be adjusted as required to assure an even distribution of workload.
- B. Department policies relative to the use of department equipment and vehicles should be adhered to and updated on a regular basis. It is recommended that the Acting Chief immediately direct the Command Staff to conduct a review of all department policies, procedures, rules and regulations and that the Acting Chief propose revisions as required as well as require strict adherence to them.
- C. At the present time, crime control strategies and personnel deployment is largely based on intuition and personnel preference. It is recommended that the department thoroughly analyze statistical data on crime and other relevant data and solicit citizen input to establish the foundation for the implementation of crime prevention and control, traffic and other police strategies.
- D. The consultants completed a "Committed Time Analysis" which was derived from available data. Consequently, it is the conclusion of the consultants that no additional patrol staffing is warranted at this time.

**II. INVESTIGATIONS**

- A. Retain a Sergeant in charge of "investigations and consolidate Detective Division with the Special Services Division.
- B. A core of two (2) detectives be assigned to this unit but an evaluation should be conducted of the current and projected investigation workload in order to determine appropriate staffing for this unit.
- C. Implement case screening procedures using solvability factors or other criteria. There is no internal statistical information available to determine the solution rate of cases assigned to this division or to individual detectives and therefore the consultants were unable to determine the effectiveness of the division or its members.
- D. Implement an expanded on-going specialized investigative training program.

### III. SPECIAL SERVICES DIVISION

- A. Staffing: Hire one (1) additional clerical staff person. The department currently operates with one (1) full-time clerical position. This does not provide sufficient clerical support to maintain proper clerical support activities. This will enable clerical staff to be assigned to provide support to each operational division (Patrol and Specialized Services), to provide trained back up support to provide for the continuity of clerical services and to enable police officers, who are currently required to perform clerical tasks to devote more of their time and attention appropriately to police enforcement tasks.
- B. A Central Records Unit should be established to ensure the integrity of the records system. Written policies and policies should be established governing the records management function. It should be noted that the lack of a central records unit is due in part to the facility and lack of adequate clerical staffing.
- C. Evidence records should be bar coded to assure more accurate record keeping.
- D. The department's management information system (PAMET) should be upgraded to enable the integration of filed reporting and computer aided dispatch component allowing for direct access to the system from the field. There is also a lack of available hardware; PC's and printers efficiently located in the department particularly in the dispatch and investigations unit areas.

### IV. ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT (STRUCTURE AND STAFFING)

- A. Reorganize the department from three (3) divisions (Uniformed Patrol, Detective, and Special Services) in to two (2) divisions: **UNIFORM PATROL AND SUPPORT SERVICES** each headed by a Lieutenant. See attached organization charts).
- B. Eliminate the Traffic Section as a specialty unit and require all patrol units to run radar and become directly involved in traffic enforcement activities.
- B. Consolidate the Detective Division into the Support Services Division. The proposed organizational structure would consist of a Chief and two (2) divisions; each headed by a Lieutenant and the Detective Sergeant reporting directly to a Lieutenant rather than the Chief. This will result in the delegation of authority in a more equitable manner.
- C. The Prosecutor should report to the Support Services Division Commander.
- D. Establish a two officer "overlap shift" to work flexible work hours during peak activity periods.
- E. Determine need for a the development of a traffic accident "Reconstructionist" and other specialized traffic training, and if warranted, include such training in the training plan.
- F. Department policies and procedures are consistent with generally accepted police practices. However, the department is not being managed in accordance with its own directives.

- G. Sick and injury leave is reportedly at an average of 7 days per employee per year. Research indicates that an employee with 6 or more days of sick leave per year is considered chronically ill. It is recommended that the Town establish a leave-monitoring program including the taking of disciplinary action when warranted.
- H. The department should develop an annual training plan to assess the individual and department-wide training needs.
- I. The department should actively seek state accreditation

#### **Equipment and Police Vehicle Operation and Maintenance**

- A. The Police Department is well equipped with the basic tools to do the job; however, in general the equipment is in need of updating.
- B. Bookkeeping process should include digital photographs, inkless fingerprints integrated into an automated management information, all evidence should be bar coded.
- C. Department vehicles are well maintained and are being replaced on a regular basis.
- D. At the present time three (3), unmarked vehicles are insufficient. Often times no unmarked vehicle is available for use. It is recommended that the department retain an additional vehicle perhaps at the next vehicle rotation.
- E. It is recommended that the department develop an equipment maintenance and replacement master plan.

#### **V. Communications Center**

- A. The communications center is equipped with modern communications equipment; however the layout of the center is inefficient and should be reconfigured to allow for improved work productivity and efficiencies.
- B. The current level of staffing is adequate to handle the workload.
- C. Department should implement a structured training program for new dispatchers as well as on-going training for regular personnel.
- D. The town should pursue the concept of a consolidated public safety communications center that dispatches for police, fire, and EMS under the operational control of the Police Department.

#### **VI. Police Facility**

- A. The current facility is ideally located but is outmoded and dysfunctional. Virtually every section of the facility is poor from an aesthetic and functional perspective. This condition effects the work safety and morale of the employees.
- B. The town should pursue the concept of a combined police and fire facility. We would recommend that approximately 18,000-23,000 square feet of space is required for a stand-alone facility.

**TOWN OF ACTON  
FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT**

**SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS**

**I. FIRE SUPPRESSION/FIELD OPERATIONS**

- A. In 1999, the fire department had 7,235 units of activity broken into 4,108 call for service and 3,127 in-service activities.
- B. Response capability and times of the department were found to be adequate. Virtually all parts of the Town are reachable within 6 minutes of detection. Initial first full alarm response within 8 minutes?
- C. Virtually no call for service nor response characteristic statistical data can be easily achieved through the PAMET system used by the department.
- D. The department has sufficient staff resources to handle current work loads and and service requirements at a reasonable level of service. With a reduction of sick leave and the return of four (4) firefighter/dispatch positions to the Emergency Services Division, the department will have a reasonable level of staff resources to handle current and projected workloads.
- E. The command structure of the department is standard for a community the size of the Town of Acton. The incident command structure is adhered to in accordance with department policy.
- F. Department policies should be developed and adhered to relative to the use of Department equipment and vehicles.
- G. An internal task force should be established an assigned the task of evaluating and updating all current standard operating procedures governing the operation of the department.
- H. All department personnel should be involved in fire prevention activities. The Department secretary should be assigned the responsibility of scheduling appointments for inspections.
- I. The department should implement a mandatory commercial inspection program.
- J. Mutual Aid Agreements were found to be outdated and therefore in immediate need of updating.
- K. All line box assignments should be reviewed and updated adding assignments if required.
- L. Hold running card assignments to five (5) alarms and beyond the fifth alarm utilize the state fire mobilization plan. Running cards are pre-programmed response assignments with the first alarm, working fire, second, third, fourth and fifth alarm response assignments.
- M. The department should implement an incident critique review procedure as part of training program. Critiques of significant incidents provide an opportunity to review the incident in a non-emergency environment to identify operational and/or policy changes that should be implemented. This technique also will foster a "buy in" professional management approach.

- N. The department has an effective array of equipment and apparatus to service a town the size of Acton in accordance with a regular vehicle replacement schedule.

## **II. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

- A. Response times and capabilities for emergency medical calls for BLS and ALS service was found to be adequate. BLS within 4-5 minutes and ALS with 6-8 minutes.
- B. As with Fire suppression and prevention activities, the current PAMET Software is outdated and not capable of providing adequate information to assess performance, service levels, works load characteristics etc and therefore should be updated with a Windows NT or comparable system compatible with the Town-wide system.
- C. All department personnel should be cross trained to function in both the fire and EMS services. Currently 32 out of 42 personnel are EMT certified.
- D. The department uses a private company to collect EMS bills. A flat service fee of \$ 14.50 per bill collected is paid. It is recommended that the Town put this service out to bid and that a percentage method of service fee be considered.
- E. Discontinue the practice of having the shift commander automatically respond to emergency incidents unless the scope of the incident exceeds the response capabilities of the ambulance and fire engine.

## **III. SUPPORT SERVICES**

- A. Department software and hardware is outdated and not capable of supporting the operation of the department in terms of record keeping, documentation and data management. The PAMET system should be replaced and upgraded as soon as possible. Shift Commanders are currently required to manually maintain a daily log of shift activities and there are no company reports completed for incidents responded to.
- B. The department should implement an incident reporting system for all companies responding to emergency incidents.
- C. Apparatus and department equipment is maintained in a proper manner in accordance with a five-(5) year capital improvement plan.
- D. The current process of all maintenance problems being assigned to one (1) Shift commander should be discontinued and decentralized to include more personnel.

## **III. COMMUNICATIONS**

- A. The Town should utilize civilian dispatchers in the Fire Department. This will have an immediate operational impact of freeing four (4) full-time fire-fighting personnel to dedicate their time to the provision of emergency services and support functions. This will assist in the department's effort to comply with the 2 in and 2 out standard on the fire ground. That standard

requires two (2) fire fighting personnel to be outside for rescue capabilities prior to a two (2) person entry team advancing with an attack line in to the interior of a structure.

- B. It is recommended that in conjunction with the police department, the town Should establish a joint public safety dispatch operation. This would present an opportunity to consolidate the dispatching function under one command and utilize existing dispatch personnel at minimal additional cost to the town. A joint task force of Police and Fire Department personnel should be formed to develop a policy manual governing the operation of a joint dispatch facility and a detailed work load analysis conducted to determine proper staffing levels and organization structure of this function.
- C. The communications center should be located in a so-called "neutral zone" in the public safety facility.
- D. The department should provide sufficient funds to obtain sufficient portable radios to equip all fire fighters with their own portable radio. The department currently has 16 UHF portable radios with nine (9) on order that are the Motorola HT1000 model. There is a need for seventeen (17) additional radios with a total estimated cost of \$13,600 or \$800/radio.

#### **IV. STATION FACILITIES**

- A. The consultants conducted a comprehensive analysis of the three (3) existing fire stations taking into consideration there location, physical condition, functionality, and accessibility. The current facilities were built in 1951, 1958, and 1961 for the protection needs and technology available in that era.
- B. It is the opinion of the consultants that all of the current stations are in need of significant enlargement and remodeling in order to function effectively. There is limited room internally and/or externally for significant alterations to be made. The building lots that the current facilities occupy do not lend themselves to the type of restructuring required. None of the facilities is ADA compliant.
- C. The consultants conducted an analysis of Fire emergency and EMS service demands. Based upon this analysis, it is the recommended that the Town pursue the use of two new (2) fire station facilities to be built on town-owned property. It is proposed that one (1) of the stations be constructed as a joint public safety facility in conjunction with the Police Department including central dispatch. This facility could be located on the same land as the current police station. The second station should be located in the north section of the town on town-owned property. This location will enable the town to adequately service the projected high growth area of them town.
- D. It is recommended that the town continue to utilize one of the existing stations to be determined by the town to house a reserve pumper for call back fire fighting personnel during major emergency condition. This facility should also house the emergency management agency personnel and equipment. It is recommended that the Fire Chief be designated as the head of the Emergency Management function. The two stations as recommended will provided

adequate locations to serve the town in a safe, and effective manner for many years.

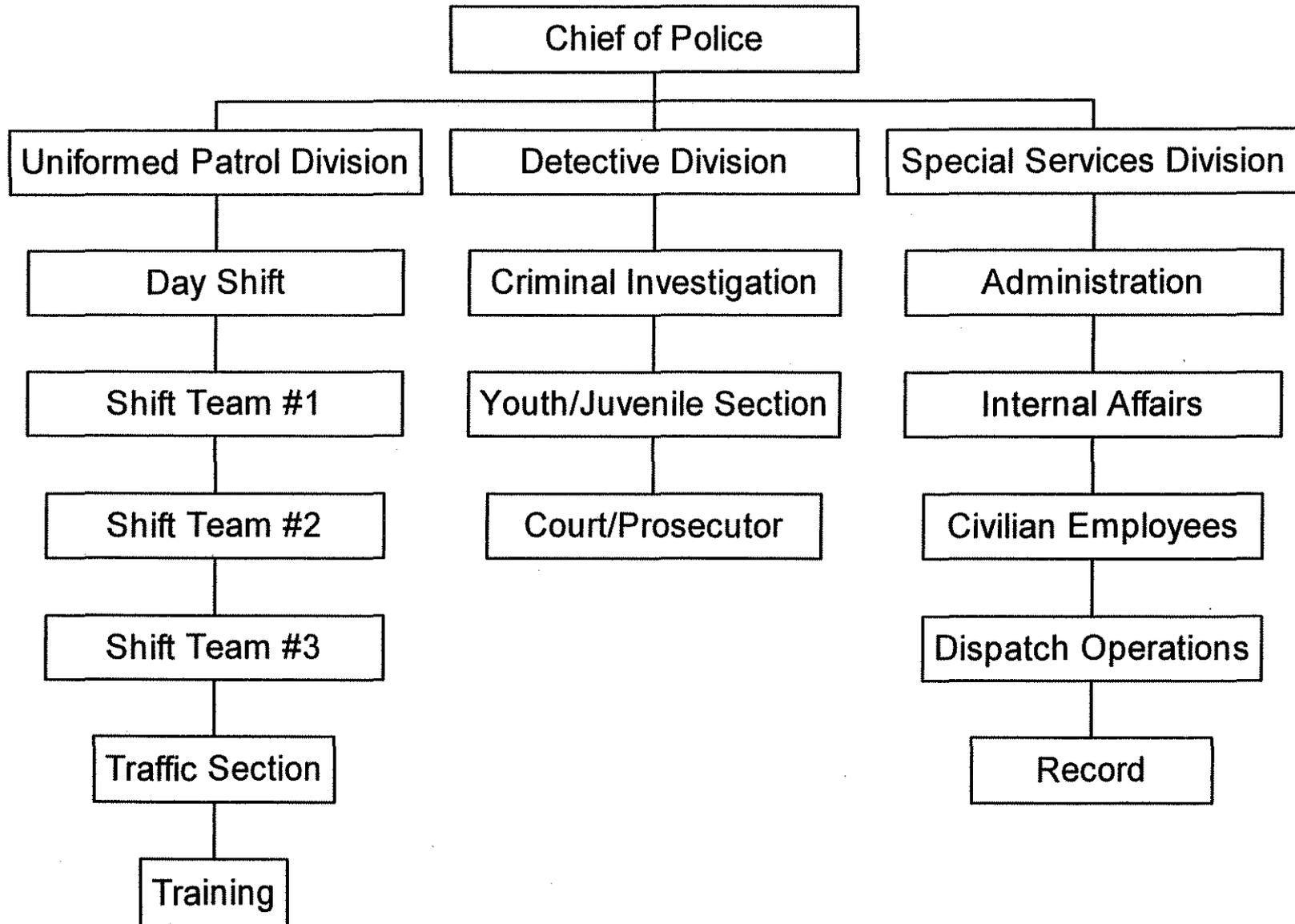
## **V. DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT**

### **A. STRATEGIC PLANNING:**

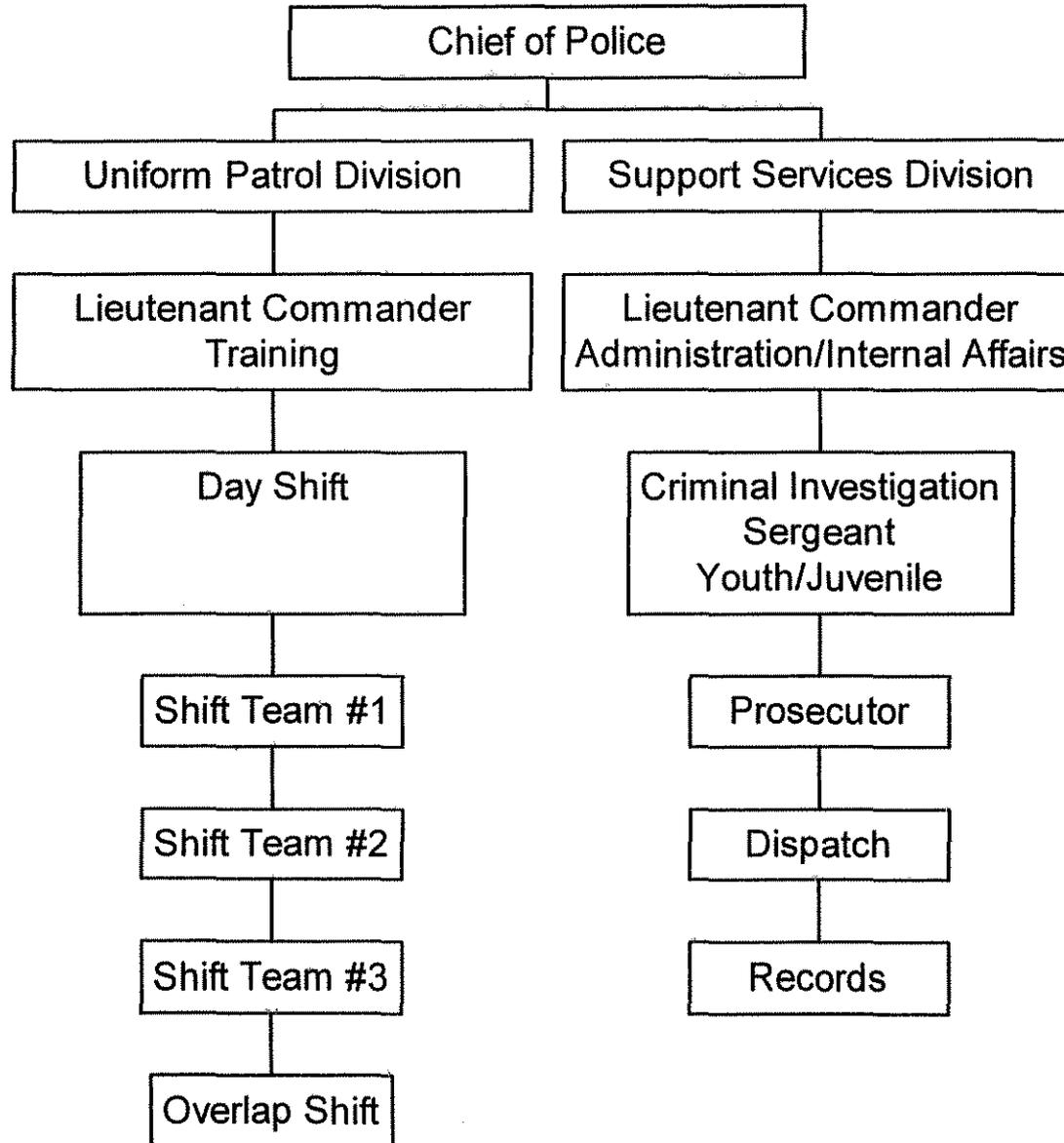
The Fire Department needs to broaden employee "buy in" to the programs and activities and develop a management approach, which supports this – after the fact. A basic participatory or team management approach can facilitate this once a long-range plan is developed in the strategic planning process and goals/objectives prioritized for individuals and the department. Specific assignments should be developed for all department personnel. The following approach could be taken which increases involvement in departmental management and increasing communication within the department while minimizing overtime:

- Designate shift and station responsibilities for specific management items (e.g. training, apparatus replacement, EMS review, department policy review etc.).
  - Have Captains and Firefighters work in teams to research and develop operation or program alternatives.
  - Support these "committees" by committing to implement findings, conclusions and recommendations.
  - Develop accountability mechanisms and communication measures to monitor these activities for all departmental personnel.
- B. A management training program needs to be developed and available for all command staff and including specific required topics and time commitments. Approaches to managing the Department needs to be re-evaluated to increase the buy-in to the concept of change. Many departments have increased the chances of success of change if all employees are brought into solving the problems.
- C. An analysis of staffing levels revealed that the department has experienced an extremely high level of sick leave. It is the consultant's opinion that this has contributed to current staffing level problems. The total hours of sick leave used in 1999 represented a loss of 2.85 FTE fire fighters. The Town should adopt a leave management program to track and monitor the use of leave.
- D. The PAMET management information system is inadequate and should be upgraded. In addition, there are an inadequate number of telephone lines serving the command station. It is recommended that two more telephone lines be installed one serving fire administration and the other serving fire prevention.
- E. The dormitory space for the shift commander at headquarters, station 3 should be partitioned off immediately providing proper privacy and separation of living quarters from public areas.

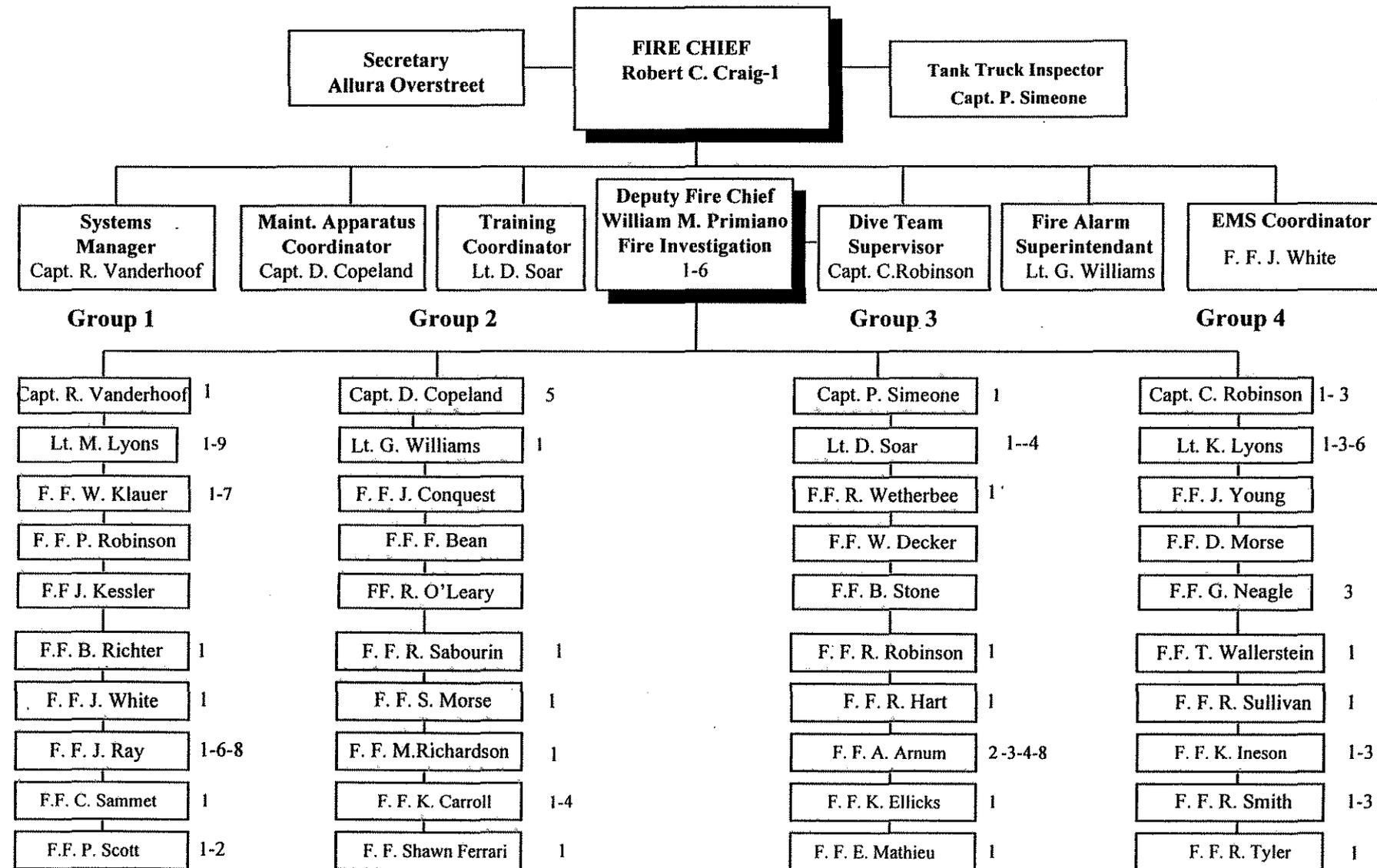
**Town of Acton  
Police Department  
Current Organizational Chart**



**Town of Acton  
Police Department  
Recommended Organizational Chart**



# TOWN OF ACTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



## FUNCTIONAL AREAS



1-E.M.T.-2-Paramedic.-3-Dive Team-4-Haz-Mat Team-5-Mechanic 6-Fire Investigator-7-Public Education-8- USAR Team-9-Quartermaster

TOWN OF ACTON  
Town Manager's Office  
472 Main Street  
Acton, Massachusetts, 01720  
(978) 264-9612  
Fax (978) 264-9630

Memo

To: Fire/Police Personnel  
From: Don Johnson  
RE: Public Safety Employee Survey  
Date: December 8, 1999

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Dear Employee:

The Town of Acton has retained the firm of Bennett Associates to conduct an organizational review of the Police and Fire Departments. The intent of this review is to increase the efficiency of providing public safety operations in the Town of Acton.

In order to assist the consultants in gathering information, it is proposed that a *confidential* employee survey be conducted. The survey instrument will be distributed to all permanent full-time and part-time staff at the beginning of the study so that results can be used in assisting the consultants during the analytical process.

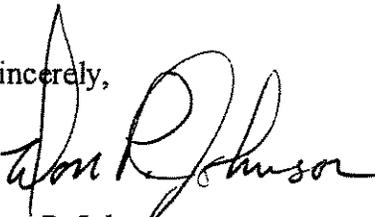
In order to assure the utmost integrity in conducting the survey, all survey forms are to be returned directly to the project team's office in the enclosed, self-addressed envelopes.

While there are common questions in the survey instrument that apply to both police and fire departments, the consultants have also included questions that are directed at each functional area in order to address unique service issues.

Please note that room has been provided for additional comments and if you would like to meet with the consulting team please indicate this request on the survey form.

Your cooperation and support in completing the survey in a prompt manner is most appreciated. Please do not hesitate to let your Chief or me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding this matter.

Sincerely,



Don P. Johnson  
Town Manager

CC: Enclosure

Town of Acton Organization Survey

<b>1. My department provides a high level of service to its various customers.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>POLICE</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	13%	0%	25%	25%	25%	
<b>FIRE</b>	5%	5%	0%	0%	5%	0%	11%	0%	28%	23%	23%	

**Strongly Disagree**

**Neutral**

**Strongly Agree**

<b>2. The citizens and businesses in Acton generally support the department in its work and needs.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>POLICE</b>	0%	0%	0%	12.5%	0%	0%	12.5%	50%	12.5%	12.5%	
<b>FIRE</b>	0%	0%	5%	0%	5%	0%	0%	31%	27%	31%	

Town of Acton Organization Survey

3. Customer service is given a high priority in the department.	Strongly Disagree		Neutral						Strongly Agree		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>POLICE</b>	0%	0%	0%	12%	13%	0%	0%	0%	25%	50%	
<b>FIRE</b>	17%	0%	5%	12%	0%	5%	5%	17%	22%	19%	

4. My department does a good job keeping me informed about new developments.	Strongly Disagree		Neutral						Strongly Agree		N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>POLICE</b>	0%	0%	12%	0%	13%	25%	12%	25%	13%	0%	
<b>FIRE</b>	17%	11%	5%	5%	5%	12%	6%	0%	0%	6%	

Town of Acton Organization Survey

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral				Strongly Agree			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>5. My department does a good job utilizing technology</b>											
<b>50%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>0%</b>	
<b>FIRE</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	

Town of Acton Organization Survey

6. In my department we do a good job planning and scheduling work.	Strongly Disagree			Neutral				Strongly Agree			N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<b>POLICE</b>	0%	0%	12%	0%	25%	13%	13%	13%	13%	12%	
<b>FIRE</b>	33%	5%	13%	12%	5%	22%	0%	0%	5%	0%	

7. Please check one statement which best describes your attitude toward your workload.	Just about the right balance between time available and the amount of work.	I could handle more work without being overloaded.	I am always overloaded. I can never catch up.	Sometimes my workload is heavy but most of the time I can keep up.
<b>POLICE</b>	0%	38%	0%	62%
<b>FIRE</b>	28%	44%	0%	28%

Town of Acton Organization Survey

8. Please check the statement that most closely characterizes the services provided by your department.	Cutting edge- the leader in the area.	About average levels of service.	Progressive And innovative	Better than most that I am familiar with	Behind the times	No opinion
<b>POLICE</b>	12%	25%	0%	38%	25%	0%
<b>FIRE</b>	0%	40%	0%	50%	5%	5%

Town of Acton Organization Survey

**Poor Fair Good Excellent**

<b>FIRE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Response times- medical emergencies.	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	23%	39%	23%
Response times to working alarms of fire.	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	11%	22%	39%	23%
Adequacy of staff for a 1 <sup>st</sup> alarm response to structure fires.	67%	28%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Accuracy/responsiveness of dispatch services.	0%	0%	5%	10%	27%	11%	5%	22%	10%	10%
Prevention information and training.	28%	11%	28%	11%	5%	17%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Fire prevention services; use of company personnel.	50%	39%	5%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Code enforcement and inspections.	39%	5%	0%	11%	0%	12%	16%	12%	5%	0%
Quality of in-house training for emergency response	33%	33%	11%	5%	0%	13%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Training and response to technical rescue incidents. (Extraction water, confined space, high and low angle rescue).	28%	28%	5%	5%	0%	17%	17	0%	0%	0%
<b>Quality of Equipment and Facilities</b>										
First line fire apparatus	28%	28%	0%	13%	13%	0%	12%	6%	0%	0%
First line medical units	5%	0%	5%	0%	5%	11%	5%	28%	33%	8%
Firefighter equipment	12%	6%	0%	0%	6%	16%	16%	28%	16%	0%
Fire station locations	22%	0%	5%	11%	11%	22%	16%	13%	0%	0%
Fire station condition	22%	6%	16%	6%	10%	28%	6%	0%	6%	0%
Firefighter protective clothing.	0%	0%	12%	0%	0%	0%	22%	22%	22%	22%
Training & Response to hazardous material events	44%	6%	0%	12%	12%	16%	10%	0%	0%	0%

Town of Acton Organization Survey

Poor Fair Good Excellent

<b>POLICE</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
Response times to calls for service.	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	0%	25%	12%	38%	13%
Availability of backup.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	38%	25%	0%	12%	25%
Department capability to enforce selected targets.	0%	0%	12%	12%	0%	12%	13%	13%	13%	25%
Amount of proactive time in the field.	0%	0%	0%	25%	0%	25%	38%	0%	0%	12%
The way officers deal with citizen requests for service	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	12%	0%	38%	38%	0%
Follow-up investigations.	0%	0%	0%	12%	12%	13%	0%	13%	25%	25%
Level of traffic enforcement.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	50%	25%	13%	0%
Accuracy and responsiveness of dispatch services.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	38%	0%	25%	12%
Availability and content of training.	0%	0%	0%	25%	13%	12%	25%	12%	13%	0%
Crime prevention.	0%	0%	25%	0%	12%	0%	0%	13%	25%	0%
<b>Quality of Equipment And Facilities</b>										
Vehicles	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	25%	25%	12%	13%	25%
Vehicle Radios	0%	0%	12%	0%	13%	0%	25%	12%	25%	13%
Hand held radios	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	25%	38%	0%	12%	0%
Officer personal equipment	0%	0%	12%	0%	13%	13%	25%	0%	25%	13%

**ACTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**STATION AND APPARATUS ASSIGNMENTS**

**STATION ONE**

**RESCUE 33**

**ENGINE 22**

**ENGINE 23R**

**FIRE ALARM TRUCK**

**PERSONNEL**

**LIEUTENANT**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**STATION TWO**

**ENGINE 26**

**LADDER 28**

**BRUSH 25**

**PERSONNEL**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**STATION THREE**

**ENGINE 24**

**ENGINE 21R**

**SPECIAL HAZARDS 29**

**CAR 31- DEPUTY CHIEF**

**CAR 30- SHIFT COMMANDER**

**CAR 1- FIRE CHIEF**

**RESCUE BOAT/TRAILER**

**PERSONNEL**

**CHIEF**

**DEPUTY CHIEF**

**CAPTAIN**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**FIRE FIGHTER**

**FIRE FIGHTER\***

**\*ASSIGNED TO COMMUNICATIONS DESK**

**ACTON FIRE DEPARTMENT  
STATION AND APPARATUS ASSIGNMENTS  
(TWO STATIONS)**

**STATION ONE**

**RESCUE 33  
ENGINE 22  
ENGINE 26  
LADDER 28  
RESCUE BOAT/TRAILER  
ENGINE 23R  
CAR 30-SHIFT COMMANDER  
CAR 31- DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF  
CAR 1- FIRE CHIEF**

**STATION TWO**

**ENGINE 24  
BRUSH 25  
SPECIAL HAZARDS 29  
ENGINE 21R  
FIRE ALARM TRUCK**

**PERSONNEL**

**FIRE CHIEF  
DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF  
CAPTAIN  
FIREFIGHTER  
FIRE FIGHTER  
FIRE FIGHTER  
FIRE FIGHTER  
FIRE FIGHTER**

**PERSONNEL**

**LIEUTENANT  
FIRE FIGHTER  
FIRE FIGHTER  
FIRE FIGHTER**

**ACTON FIRE DEPARTMENT  
CURRENT DEPLOYMENT METHODOLOGY  
(THREE STATIONS)**

<b>Medical Emergency:</b>	<b>Rescue 33 (2) Engine Co. (2)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (5)</b>
<b>Rescue Incidents:</b>	<b>Rescue 33 (2) Engine Co. (2) Special Hazards (2)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (7)</b>
<b>Haz Mat Incident:</b>	<b>Rescue 33 (2) Engine Co. (2) Special Hazards (2)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (7)</b>
<b>Structure Fire:</b>	<b>Engine Co. (2) Engine Co. (2) Ladder Co. (2) Rescue 33 (2)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (9)</b>
<b>Vehicle Fire:</b>	<b>Engine Co. (2) Engine Co. (2)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (5)</b>
<b>Brush Fire</b>	<b>Engine Co. (2) Brush (25)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (5)</b>
<b>Water/Ice Rescue:</b>	<b>Rescue 33 (2) Engine Co. (2) Special Hazards (2)</b>	<b>Shift Commander (1) Staff (7)</b>

**Structure fire requires: two (2) engines, One (1) Ladder, and a Command Officer as a first response for total compliment of thirteen (13) personnel.**