

Fire Department Strategic Plan
TOWN OF COVENTRY, CONNECTICUT

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1. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Matrix Consulting Group was retained by the Town of Coventry to develop a Fire Department Strategic Plan and to assess the needs of the future of the Town of Coventry regarding delivery of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire/rescue services. The scope of the work for this project includes the following elements:

- Provide options for future EMS/fire service delivery
- Evaluates issues of management structure and coordination
- Equipment and facilities
- Staffing and volunteer retention
- Include options and recommendations to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness

In order to conduct this study, the Matrix Consulting Group project team engaged in the following activities:

- Interviewed Town Manager and members of the Town Council to understand fire and EMS issues facing the Town of Coventry.
- Interviewed Department management of the two Fire Departments serving the Town
- Conducted small group interviews with line personnel from both of the Fire Departments
- Collected detailed data describing operations, workload, deployment, apparatus and station locations.
- Developed a descriptive profile of the fire service describing current operations, service levels, staffing, deployment, stations, etc. This was reviewed by the Ad-Hoc Fire Study Committee.

Collectively, these steps were intended to provide the project team with a full understanding of the current methods of service delivery to the Town of Coventry, the

operations of the two Fire Departments and the environment within which services are provided. This approach provides all participants with an opportunity for input into the study process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The analysis and supporting documentation contained within this report are extensive. This Executive Summary is intended to provide a brief synopsis of those results. In no way should the recommendations included in this report be construed as limiting the need to address future issues that could not be anticipated by this study. The paragraphs, below, provide a summary of our findings and recommendations with analysis of the fiscal and operational impacts. The Town of Coventry should seek to obtain tighter control of costs, expenditures, operational reliability and ensuring qualified personnel to supply these vital services. The development of written agreements between the Town and the two Fire Departments is critical for all parties – to further define roles, responsibilities and approaches for providing service to the community.

FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS	PRIORITY	FISCAL IMPACT
The current NCFD facilities, particularly their main station, are inadequate for continued use as fire / rescue stations.	<p>The Town needs to work with the NCFD and their architect to develop a new facility plan. The project team believes that many of the administrative and training needs of the NCFD can be met using existing spaces already present in the Town and CVFA facilities.</p> <p>The new facility constructed for the NCFD should make provision for the location of one of CVFA's ambulances on site. This should include accommodations for duty crew personnel.</p>	High	Unknown – the NCFD and the Town will develop specific costs in conjunction with their architect.

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FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS	PRIORITY	FISCAL IMPACT
The project team's analysis shows that the Town would be better served if EMS ambulances were responding from Station 208 and the NCFD's main station.	When a new facility is available in the north end of Town, re-deploy one CVFA ambulance to this location. Concurrently, re-deploy the second ambulance from Station 208.	Medium	None
The CVFA Main station has adequate room for offices for both Departments with some station allocation changes.	Eliminate the bunkrooms in CVFA headquarters and utilize this space for office space for NCFD. The conference room, meeting/training room, bath facilities and other common areas of the station would be shared by both Departments.	In concert with new station being built to replace NCFD main station.	None
The NCFD's Rescue 111 is more than 20 years old and has significant maintenance issues.	Allow the NCFD to include replacement of Rescue 111 in the Town's capital plan.	Medium	\$300,000 capital cost.
The Town and the two Fire Departments currently do not have contracts for service. The only existing contracts define the use and ownership of various facilities.	The Town and the two Fire Departments should enter into formal agreements defining service levels, distribution of funds, etc.	High	None

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FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS	PRIORITY	FISCAL IMPACT
<p>The Town currently pays "grants" to the two Departments for operational costs to provide fire suppression operations.</p> <p>A second grant is provided for rescue operations to NCFD. Further complicating budgetary clarity is that each physical station in each Department has separate grants for operations.</p> <p>Little if any accountability of how this money is allocated or actually spent is apparent from our review. Oversight by a knowledgeable Town employee should be implemented.</p> <p>The Town needs to provide more oversight, by a qualified individual, to oversee the organization(s) providing fire and EMS to the taxpayers of Coventry.</p>	<p>Prepare a contract for fire and rescue operations between the Town and the two Fire Departments.</p> <p>The contract should spell out specific requirements for response time averages, officer and fire fighter minimum qualifications. Option for Town to oversee administrative operations. All costs associated with operation of Town stations, apparatus, equipment etc would be included in the operations budget section. An example of the contract is provided in Appendix A.</p> <p>A Town employee would be hired to oversee budgets and operational expenses. The person would represent the Town in negotiations, establishing operational requirements, budgetary overview and review delivered services of entity(ies) providing services. This person would also be measure compliance with NFPA and OSHA rules for agencies providing fire/rescue services to the Town.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>Full time cost for this position would be \$70,000 plus another \$28,000 or more in benefits. The recommended part-time position would cost \$35,000 plus \$7,000 in benefit costs (no health insurance).</p>

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FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS	PRIORITY	FISCAL IMPACT
<p>The current station utilized by NCFD is much too small to adequately house current and future apparatus.</p>	<p>Station 2, while less centrally located, offers adequate height and width in the apparatus bays for larger equipment. Exchanging the heavy rescue and medium rescue would make it safer and easier to operate the heavy rescue. Placing Engine 111 in NCFD Station 2 and moving the smaller forestry truck to the main station would further alleviate space constraints. This would be a temporary move for safety reasons until the main station is replaced or renovated.</p> <p>These moves are not intended to be in lieu of an adequate main station, but will increase operational safety while a final solution is completed.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>The two Departments are separate legal entities responsible for maintaining and meeting all regulatory requirements.</p>	<p>The two Departments should continue to meet their own regulatory and other legal requirements. The Town is not responsible for these matters. However, the new Fire Services Director should assist the Departments as possible.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>The policies for reimbursement for mileage and provision of meals appears to constitute reimbursement and payment for services.</p>	<p>The new Fire Services Director should work with the two Departments to ensure that mileage and reimbursement are the same.</p> <p>Proper IRS documentation should be issued documenting any mileage reimbursement provided. This should be accompanied by a letter from the Chief or Board Chair verifying the recipient's volunteer status.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>None (to the Town)</p>

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FINDING	RECOMMENDATIONS	PRIORITY	FISCAL IMPACT
<p>Volunteer retention is an ongoing problem throughout the fire service throughout the country. The Town of Coventry currently enjoys a robust volunteer force between the two agencies.</p>	<p>Coordination with the two Departments should be encouraged and the ability of personnel to participate in both, as they provide some overlapping but also different services, should be encouraged. If someone is interested in EMS, but would prefer to also ride with NCFD, this should be encouraged.</p> <p>By working together or sharing volunteers the Departments can become more functionally consolidated.</p> <p>Assuring compliance with contract benchmarks would be the responsibility of the Town employee discussed above and penalties for failure to provide adequate coverage would be part of the contract.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>CVFA is the sole provider of EMS to the Town. This is exclusive of any contract for ambulance service between the Town and CVFA.</p>	<p>By moving EMS operations to its own station, the Town will have no expenses associated with EMS delivery. It is under no obligation to provide funding for any of the operational costs, except as required in the current ambulance contract, for this service. These costs include ambulance and equipment purchases, housing of ambulances and reimbursement, pay or meals/mileage of the volunteers that provide this service.</p> <p>Clear and distinct lines need to be drawn between the part of CVFA providing EMS and that providing fire/rescue to include separate officers for each operation. The rank and file can perform both operations, but the operations should be mutually exclusive for budget purposes.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>None</p>

2. CURRENT FIRE SERVICES DELIVERY ENVIRONMENT IN COVENTRY

This first section provides a brief introduction and basic overview of the Town of Coventry, Coventry Volunteer Fire Association and the North Coventry Fire Department.

1. OVERVIEW

The Town of Coventry is home to approximately 12,000 residents with land area covering approximately 38 square miles. The Town of Coventry is served by two fire departments. Both are full-hazard fire, with the Coventry Volunteer Fire Association (CVFA) providing EMS for the entire Town and the North Coventry Fire Department (NCFD) specializing in technical rescue. The NCFD does respond as a first response agency for EMS calls in their district. The two fire districts parallel the Town's Voting Districts One and Two.

- The NCFD is comprised of a cadre of 30 active firefighters and utilizes two (2) stations. The Main Station (3427 Main Street) and Station 2 (999 Merrow Road). The main station is wholly owned by NCFD (currently mortgaged) and Station 2 is Town owned.
- The CVFA is comprised of a group of 97 firefighters with some medical-only personnel operating from two stations. Station 8 (often referred to as "Central Station") is located at 1755 Main St and Station 208 on South Street. The main station is wholly owned by the Town and the substation is Town owned and built on property owned by CVFA.
- NCFD operates two (2) engine/tankers, one (1) engine, one (1) heavy rescue, one (1) light duty rescue, one (1) quick response vehicle and one (1) forestry truck.
- CVFA operates two (2) rescues (ambulances), three (3) engine/tankers, one (1) forestry truck, two (2) boats and two (2) service vehicles.

- NCFD is first response fire/EMS for the 2nd voting district and first response for heavy rescue for the 1st and 2nd voting districts.
- CVFA is first response fire/EMS for the 1st voting district and provides EMS transport for 1st and 2nd voting districts.
- NCFD responded to 654 calls last year.
- CVFA responded to 1,010 calls last year.
- The Town has a Fire Marshal who is responsible for code enforcement, fire investigations (cause and origin), liquor licenses, blasting permits and inspections of multiple occupancy (3+) family residencies for the Town. This position is combined with general code enforcement for the Town.

Up until 1948 the Town was served by a single Fire Department. At that point, the North Coventry Fire Department was created to protect the 2nd Voting District. EMS response was retained and developed by the CVFA while the NCFD took on the responsibility of rescue calls for the entire Town. One of the main advantages of two separate Fire Departments is that each is eligible for federal grants under the National Firefighters Assistance program and other grant programs. An ancillary benefit is when someone is no longer interested in volunteering with one Department, they have the option of resigning and joining the other Department. Each department accepts volunteers from the other district. Some issues with separate Departments are:

- Duplicity of equipment (to meet ISO rating requirements).
- Duplicity of response (NCFD responds to EMS calls in their district as does CVFA for transport).
- Both departments are funded through Town taxes, but CVFA also collects funds for EMS. These funds are separate from taxes. Some onetime payments are "given" to NCFD by CVFA ambulance reimbursement, such as replacement tires for their rescue and re-supply of medical disposables. This is based on an agreement between the two departments that allow for up to \$5,000 annually, for medical supplies for NCFD from the ambulance reimbursement fund. Any additional funds requested, such as for the purchase of the tires for the rescue are taken under consideration by CVFA.

Both Departments are dispatched through the Tolland County Dispatch center. Both departments are toned out for reported structure fires regardless of which area of Town the call originates. The Town pays for certain costs such as required physicals and pays mileage reimbursement and service award program costs as part of the annual budgeting grant.

2. ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING LEVELS

In total, the Fire Departments have 97 and 30 active volunteer fire fighters classified within the following ranks/positions:

POSITION	CVFA	NCFD	TOTAL
Chief	1	1	2
Deputy Chief	1	1	2
Assistant Chief	1	0	1
Captain	2	2	4
Lieutenant	2	2	4
Firefighter / EMT	88	26	115
Total	97	30	127

The exhibits, which follow, describe the key roles and responsibilities of various positions within the two departments. These summaries are not intended to be detailed job descriptions but rather provide an overview of the main responsibilities and functions within each Fire Department:

North Coventry Fire Department

POSITION	#	KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Fire Chief	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall operation and management of department • Reports to Board of Directors • Oversees purchases and budget preparation • HIPAA compliance Officer • Prepare and present department related reports • Public Information Officer
Deputy Fire Chief	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the operational aspect of the department for emergency operations • Personnel Officer

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POSITION	#	KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
1 st Captain	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for operation of Main Station.
2 nd Captain	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for operation of Substation.
1 st Lieutenant	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists 1st Captain with duties
2 nd Lieutenant	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists 2nd captain with duties
Firefighter	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond as needed to fire and hazardous calls as dispatched. Responds and operated at Rescue calls throughout Town

Coventry Volunteer Fire Association

POSITION	#	KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Fire Chief	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall operation and management of department Reports to Board of Directors Oversees purchases and budget preparation HIPPA compliance Officer Prepare and present department related reports Public Information Officer
Deputy Fire Chief	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for the operational aspect of the department for emergency operations Personnel Officer
Assistant Fire Chief	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains and distributes turnout gear and accountability tags Personnel-related issues including self improvement training Oversees dive team and serves as team commander
Captain	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department apparatus/equipment supervisor Works with committees for purchasing new apparatus and equipment Responsible for alphanumeric and tone/voice pagers New member mentor Department training officer

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POSITION	#	KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Lieutenant	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant training officer • EMS Supervisor • Tracks probationary members • Supervises Station 8 • Oversees non-emergency standbys and special requests • Works with mentoring system for probationary members • Pre-plan Task Force member • Assistant Training Officer • Assists with fire budget items
Chief Engineer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees operations and use of apparatus, equipment and apparatus engineers • Oversees apparatus repairs and inspections • Appoints apparatus engineers
Captain Fire Police	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents department at Tri-County Fire Police • Directs all fire police activities • Prepares budget items pertaining to fire police
Lieutenant Fire Police	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of Tri-County Fire Police • Assists Captain Fire Police with his/her duties
Safety Officer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforces NFPA 1500 and 1521 • Identifies safety and health hazards and develops plan to mitigate • Maintains records of accidents, occupational deaths, injuries, illnesses and exposures • Chairs Fire Department Safety Committee • Oversees Department Health Officer
Health Officer	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for overall health of Department Members • Maintains Department physical records and scheduling • Recommends and initiates physical training • Investigates reports of injuries
Apparatus Engineer	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains assigned apparatus • Completes minor repairs on their assigned apparatus
Firefighter	90	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond as needed to fire and hazardous calls as dispatched. • Of these personnel, approximately 50 are EMT-B's.

The section that follows presents a summary of the fire station locations and assignment of apparatus.

3. FIRE STATION LOCATION AND APPARATUS PLACEMENT

The following tables provide a summary of the fire station locations, the type of apparatus housed at each location and special notes as required.

North Coventry Fire Department

STATION	ADDRESS	UNIT(S)	APPARATUS SPECIFICATIONS	NOTES
Main Station (Head quarters)	3427 Main St	Engine 111	2005 E-One 1000 GPM 600 gallon capacity	4-wheel drive
		Engine Tank 311	1993 E-One Cyclone 1500 GPM 1000 gallon capacity	
		Rescue 111	1988 Ranger Body on International Cab and Chassis	Rapid response
		Rescue 311	2002 Chevrolet Suburban	
Station 2	999 Merrow RD	Engine Tank 211	1992 E-One Cyclone 1500 GPM 1000 Gallon capacity	
		Forestry 111	1986 Military Surplus Pick-up 150 gallon + Class A foam tank	
		Rescue 211	1997 F-350 with utility body	

Coventry Volunteer Fire Association

STATION	ADDRESS	UNIT(S)	APPARATUS SPECIFICATIONS	NOTES	
Central Station	1755 Main Street	Rescue 508	2003 Ford E450 Type III	refurbished in 1992	
		Rescue 608	2007 Ford E450 Type II		
		Engine Tank 108	1974 Mack CF600 1250gpm 1000 gallon water 20 gallon foam		
		Engine Tank 208*	1998 HME/Marion 1500gpm 1000 gallon water 20 gallon foam		4 wheel drive
		Forestry 108	2002 Ford F350 XL 18hp Honda pump 200 gallon water 12 gallon foam		Refurbished in 1994
		Service 108	1985 GMS Sierra 250gpm 200 gallons water 20 gallon foam		Fire Police vehicle
		Service 208	2000 Ford E450 Type III		Refurbished in 2000
		Marine 108	1998 Grumman pontoon boat		
Station 208	1645 South Street	Rescue 308	2002 Suburban	¾ Ton four wheel drive	
		Engine Tank 308*	2002 E-One 1500gpm 1000 gallon water 20 gallon foam		
		Marine 208 Water Rescue Trailer	2005 Mercury Inflatable 2004 Hallmark		24 foot enclosed trailer

* Engine 208 and 308 are rotated between the stations to even out use due to call volume differences.

Marine 208, Rescue 308, marine 108, Rescue 608, and Rescue 508 were purchased from monies collected for EMS recovery. The Water Rescue Trailer was purchased through donations from residents and businesses.

In 1998, the Town replaced both CVFA stations. Both stations are modern and efficient. They contain enough room for apparatus storage and movement. The Central

station (Main Street) also houses training facilities and office space. The NCFD stations have not been replaced or modernized.

4. FIRE AND EMS RESPONSE GUIDELINES

Response guidelines for fire and EMS are generally governed by Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG) and can vary by Department and local conditions.

Office of Emergency Medical Services (Connecticut State Health) (OEMS) reports under Public Health Code 19A-179-1, the Primary Service Assignment (PSA) is held by Coventry Volunteer Fire Association and can only be removed as the town's EMS provider by petition citing lack of service or gross negligence by the agency. In the event the Town declines to cancel the agreement for service between themselves and CVFA, CVFA will still retain the PSA for the town. In the event NCFD chooses to begin providing sole EMS to the residents of their fire district, they could petition OEMS, but must prove lack of service and/or negligence.

In order to maintain service, CVFA provides a Duty Crew schedule to maintain personnel at the fire station (Central Station). Duty Crew members must sign up for the shift prior to that day and may respond from work or home, but must respond to all calls.

Duty crews consist of any of the following combinations:

- EMT driver with EMT first-aider, up to one fire only member and up to two fire police
- MRT driver with EMT first-aider, up to one fire only member and up to two fire police
- Two EMT first aiders one of which is a driver, up to one fire only member and up to two fire police
- A CPR certified driver with an EMT first-aider and EMT assistant first aider, up to one fire only member and up to two fire police

- A CPR certified driver with an EMT first-aider and MRT assistant first-aider, up to one fire only member and up to two fire police
- A Duty Crew Firefighter is defined as a member who is Certified Firefighter I or higher, is an interior firefighter and holds a valid CPR certification

A duty crew is not compensated for their time. However meal(s) will be provided for the following: 3 medical, 1 firefighter, 2 fire police and 2 observers (1 fire and 1 EMS). In order to qualify for meal(s), the following shall apply:

- 7 hours, 59 minutes and below during one duty shift = 1 meal
- 8 hours or more during one duty shift = 2 meals
- The duty crew meal or meal stipend must be used the same day the duty crew is completed and does not carry over to the next duty shift, members can eat the meal at the conclusion of their shift
- All food for meals at the station will be purchased with Duty Crew meal funds.

North Coventry Fire Department does not provide meals or have duty crews.

5. FIRE AND EMS WORKLOAD

The two Departments respond to between 1,000-1,200 calls a year. EMS calls make up approximately 75% percent of all calls and brings in approximately \$252,000 annually for the CVFA. This money is in addition to Town budgeting and is utilized for ambulance purchases and other items not covered by Town budget. The CVFA recently purchased a Chevrolet Suburban for responses through donations and ambulances for CVFA (town-wide response) are paid for through EMS reimbursements.

COVENTRY VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSOCIATION
(January 1, 2007 – September 30, 2007)

TYPE OF CALL	NUMBER
Fires	247
EMS	782
Other Calls	2
TOTAL	1,031

NORTH COVENTRY FIRE DEPARTMENT
(January 1, 2007 – September 30, 2007)

TYPE OF CALL	NUMBER
Brush	3
CO	6
EMS	156
Ambulance calls	
Fire out of District (CVFA)	51
Fire Alarms	20
Haz-Mat	9
Investigation	5
Mutual Aid EMS (CVFA)	71
MVC	45
MVC (out of district)	45
Search	4
Service calls	59
Smoke in Building	20
Stand-by	3
Chimney Fire	3
Structure Fire	2
Vehicle Fire	3
Wires down	23
Total Fires	
TOTAL	528

*Data was not broken down to types of incidents.

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Call breakdown by time of day (10/01/06 – 09/30/07)

TIME OF DAY	NCFD	CVFA
0000-0059	13	Data Unavailable from System
0100-0159	11	Data Unavailable from System
0200-0259	12	Data Unavailable from System
0300-0359	2	Data Unavailable from System
0400-0459	2	Data Unavailable from System
0500-0559	8	Data Unavailable from System
0600-0659	18	Data Unavailable from System
0700-0759	36	Data Unavailable from System
0800-0859	67	Data Unavailable from System
0900-0959	66	Data Unavailable from System
1000-1059	70	Data Unavailable from System
1100-1159	23	Data Unavailable from System
1200-1259	33	Data Unavailable from System
1300-1359	28	Data Unavailable from System
1400-1459	29	Data Unavailable from System
1500-1559	54	Data Unavailable from System
1600-1659	35	Data Unavailable from System
1700-1759	50	Data Unavailable from System
1800-1859	32	Data Unavailable from System
1900-1959	80	Data Unavailable from System
2000-2059	19	Data Unavailable from System
2100-2159	15	Data Unavailable from System
2200-2259	16	Data Unavailable from System
2300-2359	7	Data Unavailable from System
TOTAL	726	

EMS CALL BREAKDOWN (TOWN-WIDE)
January 1, 2007 – September 30, 2007

Total number of EMS call requests	408
Number of calls responded to	408
Average Response time	7.25 minutes
Number of calls passed to another provider	3
Mutual Aid	7 (2 to Mansfield, 1 to Andover, 2 to UCONN)
Number of calls First Responders on scene prior to arrival	264
Average First Responder response time	5
Number of ALS intercept/on scene	175
Number of ALS transports	155
Total number of trauma patients	14
Medical Emergency patients	319
Cardiac arrests	2
Number of juvenile patients	39

3. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT PLANNING

The Town of Coventry's two Fire Departments operate from four facilities located strategically in the Town. The two facilities utilized by the CVFA were rebuilt entirely in 1998. These facilities were modernized and expanded to support effective fire and EMS operations. In recent years, the Town has struggled with how best to address similar facility needs exhibited by the NCFD's two fire stations. This chapter provides the project team's assessment of the condition of the two facilities and provides several options for the Town to consider as it addresses these issues.

1. THE CURRENT NCFD HEADQUARTERS FACILITY IS INADEQUATE FOR MODERN FIRE / RESCUE OPERATIONS.

Part of the stated reason for this study is the requested replacement of the NCFD Main Station on the northern end of Main Street. Since the two stations that CVFA respond from were new in 1998, they will not be assessed. A cursory review indicates that both facilities are in generally good condition and are well maintained.

NCFD main station was originally a single story and was initially little more than a building that housed apparatus. Since the initial construction of the station, additional apparatus bays have been added and a second floor was also added. The second floor was intended for use as a banquet hall for public rentals. It is not handicapped accessible and its use as a banquet hall has been eliminated. This banquet area has a large commercial-style kitchen, separate male/female restroom facilities, and a large hall. This area could be extensively remodeled and utilized as a training area and ready room (indeed, various architectural plans have suggested this use). It could also be developed as living area for "on-duty" personnel. This area could be retrofitted to

provide shower/locker rooms, a ready room, needed office space, training room space and even bunk rooms. This does not take into account the lack of sufficient space on the apparatus floor for modern fire equipment. The first floor is inadequate for present and future apparatus. Some of the issues are:

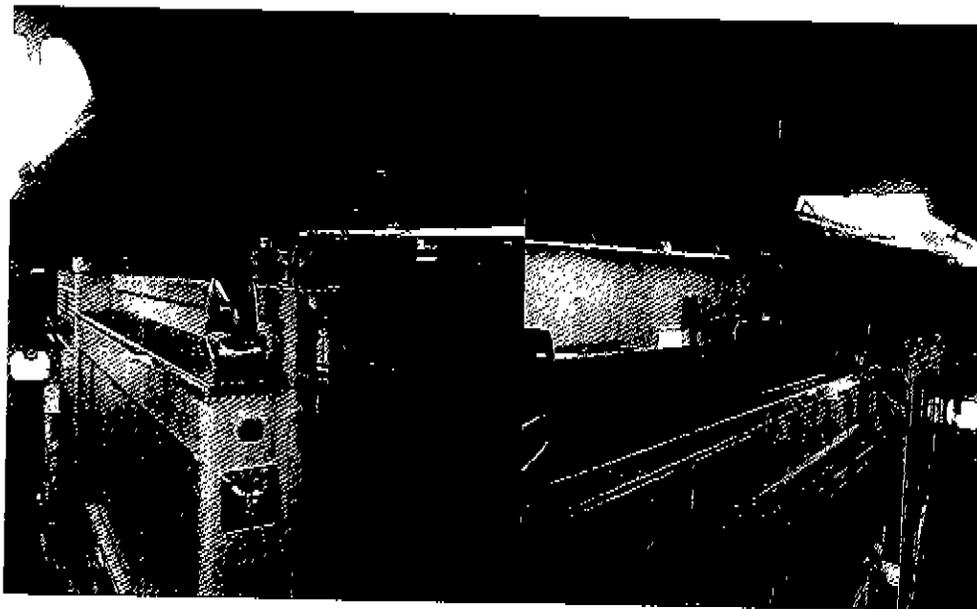
- Low clearance for apparatus.
- Little or no room around apparatus bays which creates hazards for responding personnel.
- No adequate administrative offices.
- No bunkrooms, etc for emergency standbys and future.

The photos, which follow, document many of these issues:



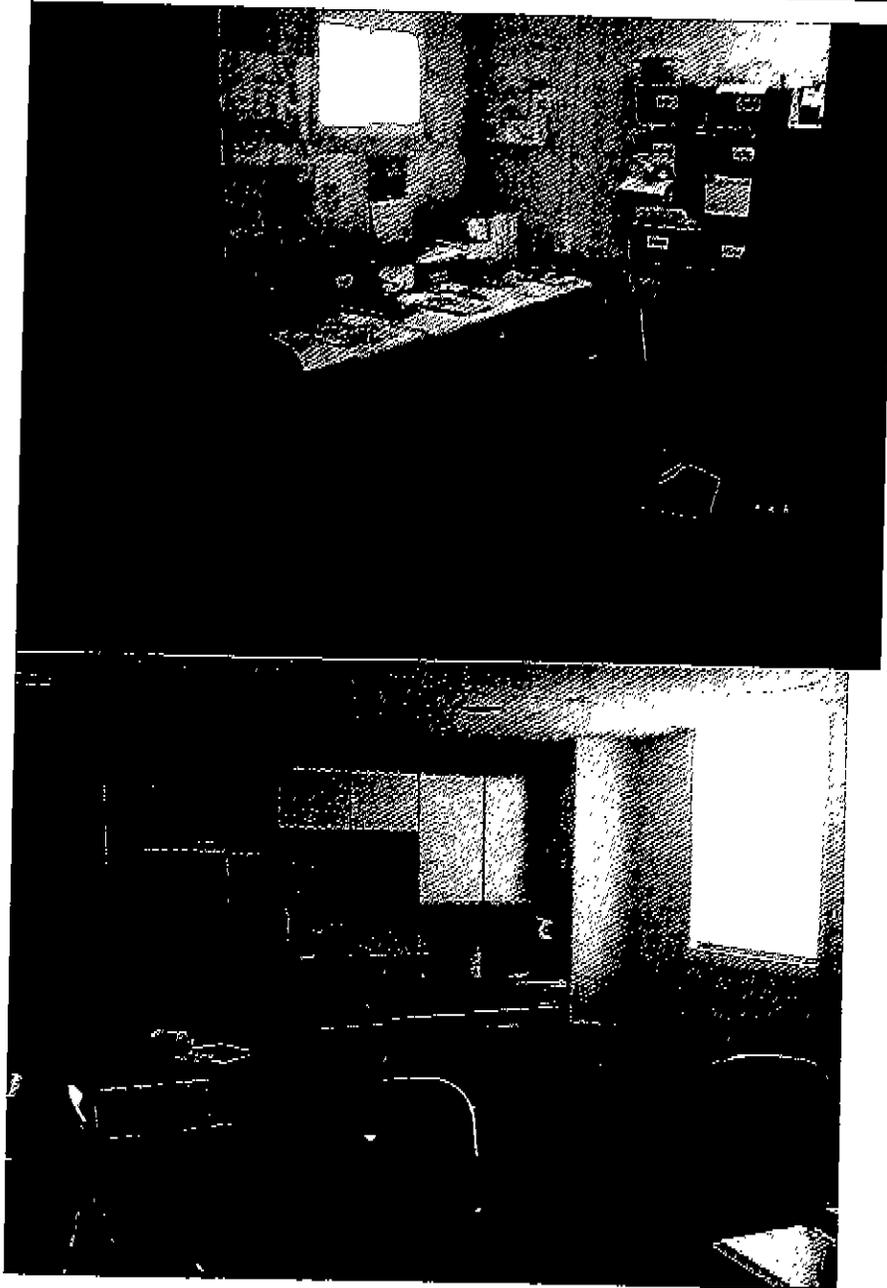


The above photos show the lack of space around the apparatus. Multiple trip hazards are seen including storage of gear between apparatus and steel plates on floor in front of each apparatus. More photographs of the apparatus bay show the tight fit and lack of clearance around the current units.





The preceding photos show the lack of clearance above the apparatus. Special apparatus would need to be ordered, adding to the cost, in order to put new apparatus in service in this station.



The office space is limited to a single room at the rear of the apparatus floor in a shared space with the only "ready room" in the station. Furnishings consist of folding chairs, a folding table and a small kitchenette. The only rest rooms in the facility are on the second floor and are only minimally heated.

In summary, the project team found the following significant issues within both facilities operated by the NCFD:

- Apparatus bay issues exist with length, width and height of the room in relationship to modern fire / rescue equipment. This presents both safety issues for volunteers (tripping, crushing risks) as well as the potential for damage to fire apparatus.
- Lack of proper rest room facilities for volunteers in the operational areas of the main station,
- Lack of proper office and administrative space. No separation of this space from other common areas.
- Lack of storage space that is secured and distinct from other common areas.

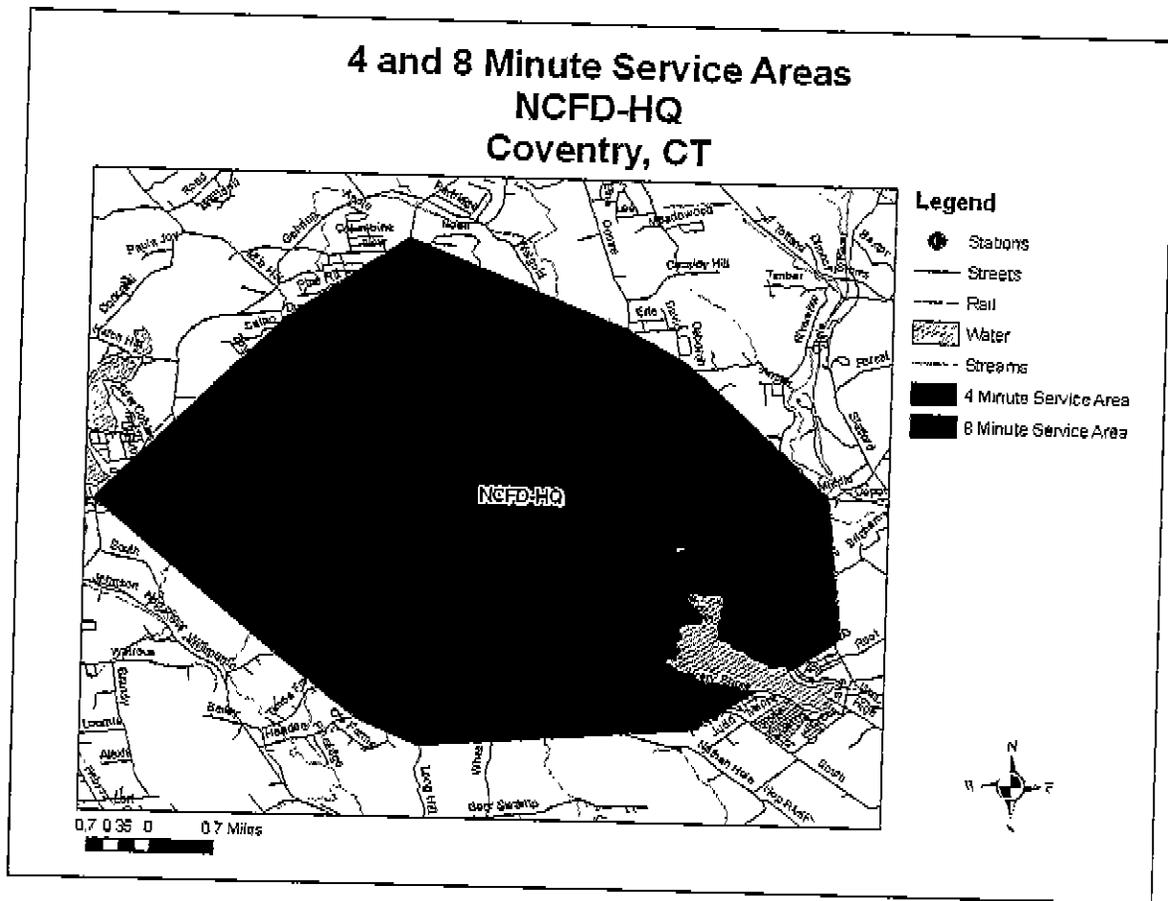
Recommendation: The facilities being utilized by the NCFD are no longer adequate for safe and effective fire / rescue operations. The Town should take steps to address these issues in conjunction with the NCFD and their architect. A new facility should be developed for the NCFD. Options for consideration, including placement of CVFA ambulance and sharing of administrative space are addressed in this report.

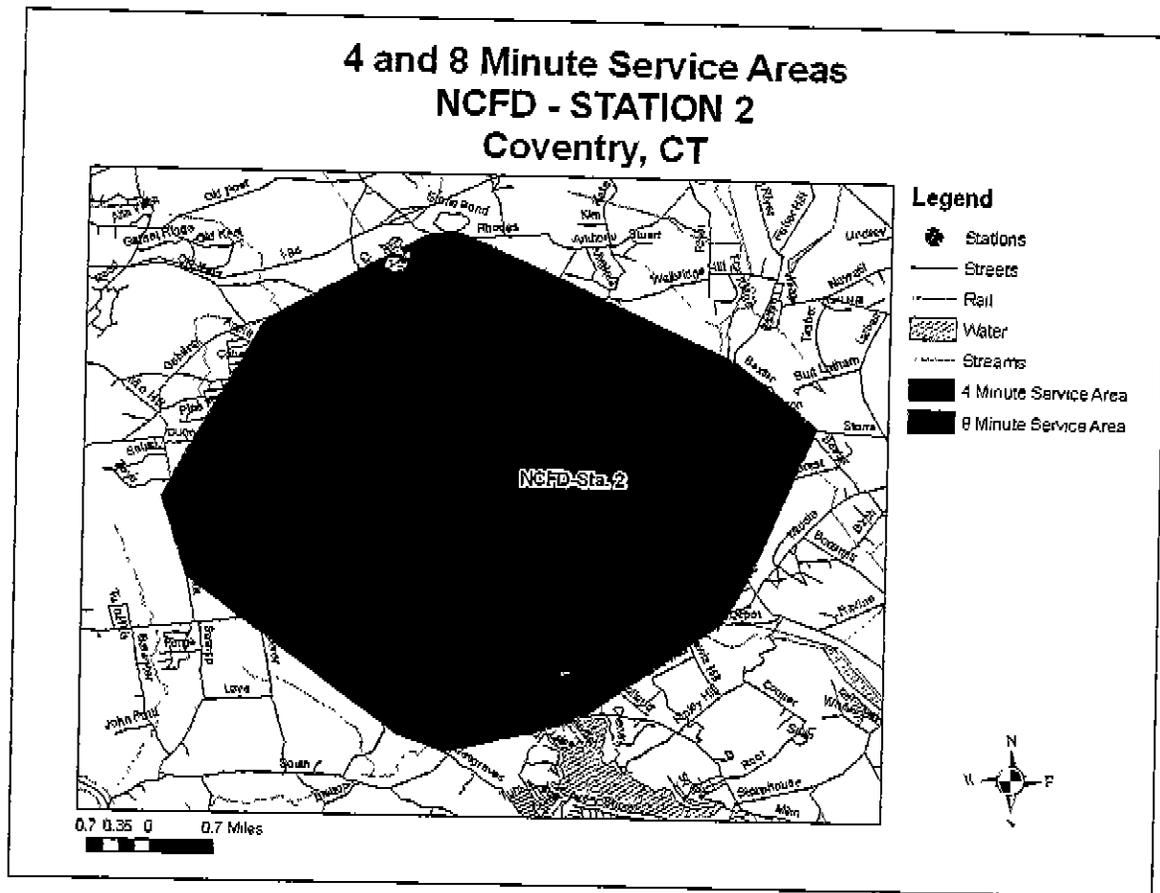
2. STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO REDUCE THE NEED FOR MAJOR FACILITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE TOWN BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EXISTING ADMINISTRATIVE AND TRAINING SPACES.

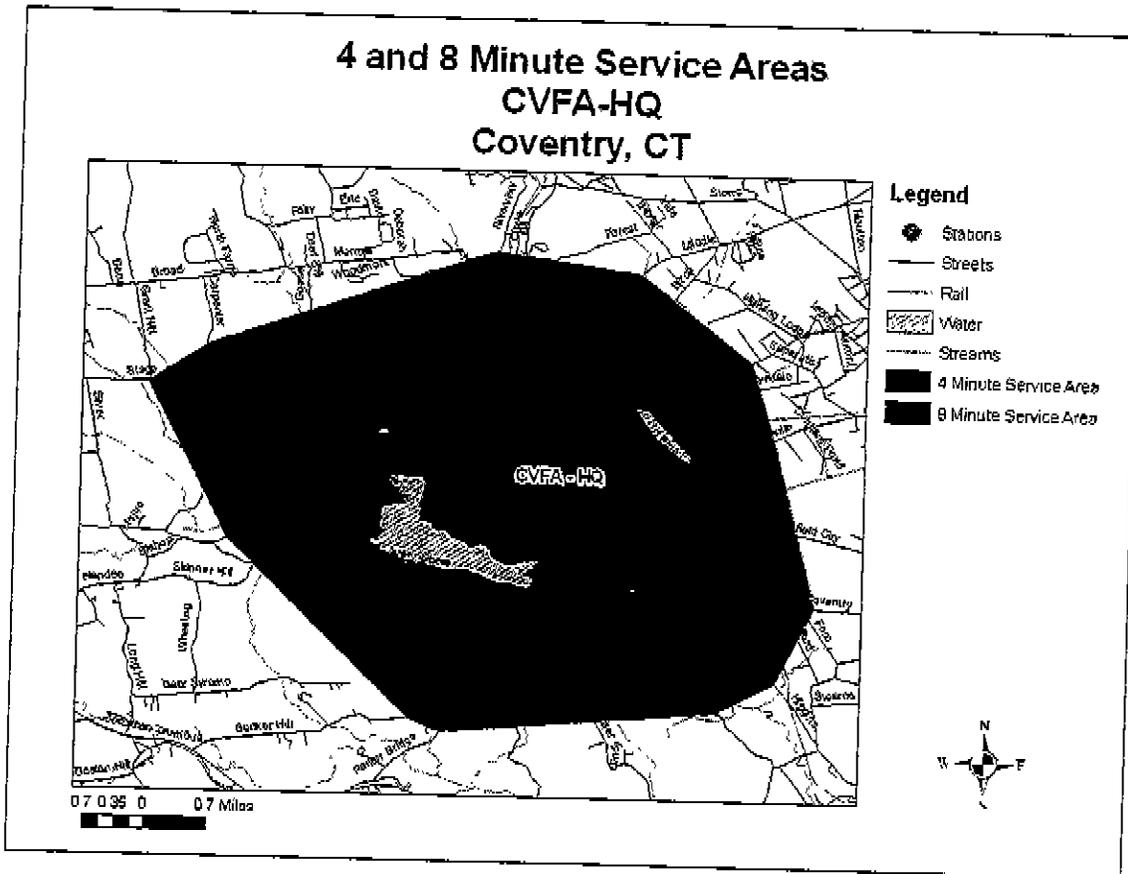
Approximately 10 years ago, the Town constructed a station (currently used as the headquarters for the CVFA) which is complete with administration, living, support and administrative spaces. A substation was constructed on South Street at the same time. The NCFD's headquarters facility is suffering from major issues, as described in the preceding section. Steps should be taken to maximize the use of existing space for both agencies. Much of the space that the NCFD lacks is available in the facility across the street from the Town building. Additional space can be made available by shifting EMS operations to the CVFA's second station.

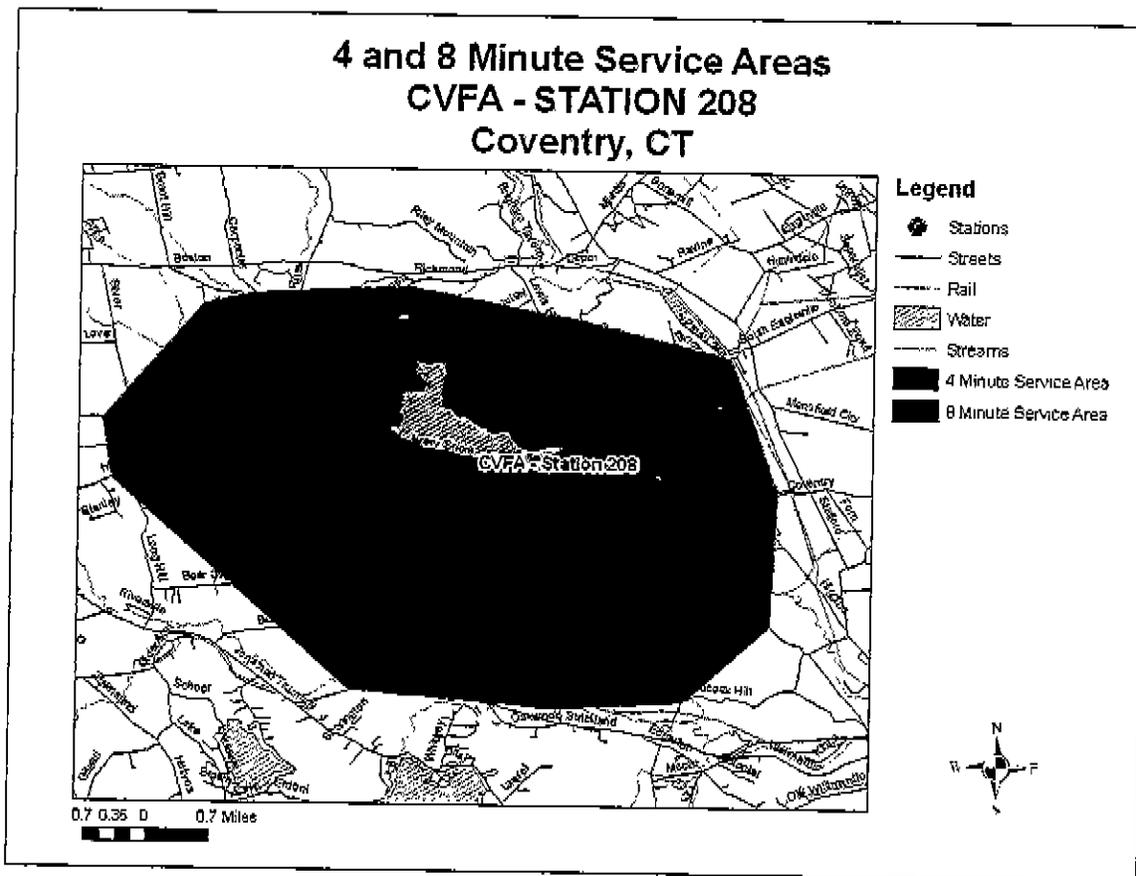
The Town can, and should, utilize the station on South St for EMS (current CVFA Station 208). The bays are large enough for the current ambulances (or larger ones in the future), and a vehicle for fire police. Furthermore, by separating the two services, a better accounting of finances would come into play. The ambulance service should cost the Town nothing other than the dispatch allotment and the cost of the contract for paramedic intercept service. What is left of the fire service equipment would be utilized in two or three stations.

The following response time maps indicate that running EMS from Central station allows a four-minute response time for the center of the Town, the peak workload area of the community. An eight-minute response time covers most of the population. If EMS is moved to Station 208 on South Street, it skews the four minute response to the south. However, placing the second ambulance in the NCFD main station, the resulting overlap will provide the best four-minute EMS response for the larger town and would extend the eight-minute coverage likewise. It is important to understand these maps show the drive-time component of response times, and they do not consider historical call locations.

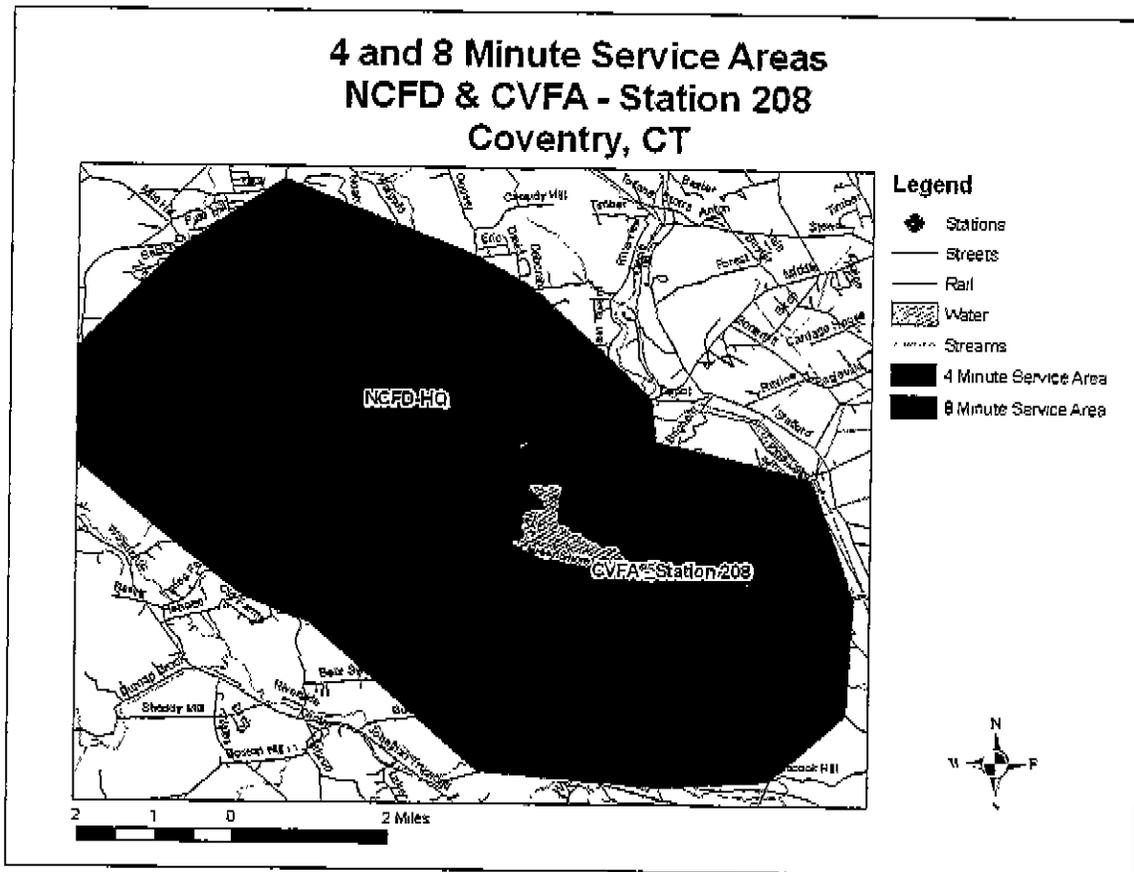








The following map illustrates the coverage if one ambulance is stationed in CVFA Station 208 and one at the site of the current NCFD main station. The current practice of having duty crews in the Central station can be continued at the new locations to man the ambulances. This duty crew staffing, and the four minute response areas will make EMS delivery more effective for the entire Town. It would also not require the response of fire apparatus to EMS calls other than motor vehicle crashes and/or entrapment or extra personnel needed. This will allow full separation of EMS from the fire service and relieve the Town from funding the ambulance service.



By re-deploying EMS administration, supplies and duty crews from the current CVFA headquarters, the Town can free up significant space which the NCFD can use for administration, training, secure storage and other needs. This would enable the Town to consider construction of a smaller facility for the NCFD than a full-scale headquarters facility. This would also provide enhanced training opportunities for the NCFD and the CVFA to work together on fire and EMS training.

Recommendation: The Town should consider re-deploying EMS units to provide coverage from either Station 208 alone or from Station 208 and from the location of the NCFD's current headquarters. This configuration should be taken into consideration as the Town develops a new facility for the NCFD.

3. THE CURRENT APPARATUS FLEET EXCEEDS THE OVERALL NEEDS OF A SINGLE PROVIDER. RESCUE 111 SHOULD BE REPLACED.

The Town of Coventry currently owns apparatus to support operations of two separate Departments. These resources would not be required for the purposes of a single consolidated service provide for fire and EMS services. However, this is not the situation that exists within the Town currently. Recall that all of the major pieces of apparatus are owned by the Town of Coventry. The existing apparatus could be distributed as follows by separating EMS to a separate entity:

- The following fire apparatus are currently operated in the Town by the two Fire Departments:
 - Engine 111 (NCFD) 2005 E-One 1000/gpm 600 gallon
 - Engine Tank 311 (NCFD)1992 E-One 1500gpm 1000 gallon
 - Engine Tank 211 (NCFD) 1992 E-One 1500gpm 1000 gallon
 - Forestry 111 (NCFD) 1986 Military pick-up 150 gallon
 - Engine Tank 108 (CVFA) 1974 Mack CF600 1250gpm 1000 gallon
 - Engine Tank 208 (CVFA) 1998 HME/Marion 1500gpm 1000 gallon
 - Forestry 108 (CVFA) 2002 Ford F350 18hp Honda pump 200 gallon
 - Engine Tank 308 (CVFA) 2002 E-One 1500gpm 1000 gallon
 - Rescue 111 1988 Ranger Body on Internal cab and chassis (heavy rescue)

- The following ambulances transport units are operated by the CVFA as the EMS squad:
 - Rescue 508 2003 Ford E450 Type III

- Rescue 608 2007 Ford E450 Type III
- The following support apparatus are also in service:
 - Service 208 (fire police “ambulance”)
 - Rescue 308 2002 Suburban (Owned by CVFA)
 - Water rescue trailer (Owned by CVFA)
 - Marine 208 2005 Mercury inflatable (CVFA)
 - Rescue 311 2002 Chevy suburban (owned by NCFD)

The project team found that the fire apparatus are generally in good condition and that they appear to be well maintained. While this study is not focused on fleet issues, per se, it was important to determine if all units that are in service today are likely to be in service in the near to mid-term for the purposes of assessing the facility needs of the Town’s fire services providers.

One piece of equipment that needs immediate attention is the heavy rescue, Rescue 111. This apparatus is the primary response piece for rescue calls throughout the Town. The current apparatus is a 1988 Ranger Body on an International cab and chassis. This vehicle is now twenty years old and grossly out of date. One of the reasons this apparatus is still in service is that any replacement would have needed to be housed in the antiquated main station of NCFD and custom built. With the larger bays in several of the proposed changes, a new rescue should be designed and ordered.

Recommendation: The NCFD should be allowed to pursue replacement of Rescue 111 through the Town’s capital budgeting process. A unit similar in scope and capabilities should be acquired. The cost of such a unit will be approximately \$300,000.

4. ANALYSIS OF ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

This chapter provides the project team's analysis of fire, rescue and emergency medical services provided to the Town of Coventry. This chapter is organized around the questions posed in the contracts.

- 1. IS IT MORE BENEFICIAL TO HAVE SEPARATE DEPARTMENTS WITH ENTIRELY SEPARATE BOARDS AND OFFICERS, OR SHOULD SOME LEVEL OF MERGER BE PURSUED? WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS AND PROS AND CONS OF EACH APPROACH?**

The question of merging two agencies becomes quite complex with survivorship issues and who will manage the new organization. In 1948 NCFD was formed by a "break-away faction" from the then single fire Department in Town. By trying to merge the two Departments, the Town will be caught in the middle of personnel and personality issues. Since neither Department is an entity of the Town, the Town government has no leverage to deal with or force such a merger. There are many benefits to a single entity including better fiscal control and accountability, uniformity in training and service provided throughout the Town, and less duplication of services.

Continuing the status quo will not alleviate the issues of the two entities competing for the same funding. The current funding is not equitable although all taxpayers pay for the services. While the CVFA is quick to point out that it can only use the ambulance reimbursement for EMS costs, they have, through these funds, purchased a thermal imaging camera "to locate patients", replaced tires for NCFD's rescue truck, and purchased dive equipment. Also the utilities for the Central station are divided between the ambulance fund and the monies granted to CVFA by the Town

without any cost allocation for splitting the sum. Perhaps under the current practices, the CVFA could cap the number of volunteers so they could reduce the cost of equipping them. Also anyone who applies could be placed on a waiting list and/or be directed to NCFD which has a need for more personnel.

In some ways, the first step of changing to a one-Department community has already begun, that is, though functional consolidation. The two departments have split EMS transport and rescue operations so there is not a duplication of these services. The next step would be to start combining administrative responsibilities. The Town can play a critical part with this by combining the budget and bill paying responsibilities under the Town offices. The next step for the fire service would be to look at apparatus placement where it makes the most sense for emergency response rather than which Department operates the piece. Both Departments already accept membership from residents throughout the Town and apparatus are utilized for calls throughout the Town as well. This includes EMS, rescue, structure fires and others. Eventually, the departments will be able to merge with little or no issues rising.

Under the current arrangement, there is no formal contract guiding the relationship between the Town and either of the two Fire Departments. A contract can be created at this point for each fire Department which will allow the Town to have more control on how the Departments will operate and spell out specific benchmarks to be sure they are meeting their responsibilities. These agreements will also provide more clarity to the two Departments regarding their interactions with the Town. The key elements of the contract, an example of which is provided in Appendix A, are summarized, below:

- Description of service levels, service expectations and actual services and programs to be provided by each Department. This should include reference to fire suppression, emergency medical response, technical rescue, fire prevention / public education, dive team participation, etc.
- Description of the key funding mechanisms in place between the Town and the two Departments. This should detail the use of EMS funds collected by the CVFA as well as the budget setting process for both operations and capital costs. This section of the contract should also document how the budgets are to be determined.
- Summary of the uses and permissibility of Departmental fund raising.
- Description of the process by which the funds will be disbursed and accounted for that make up the Town's annual grant to the Department.
- Summary of insurance requirements and the indemnification clause for the participants.

The contract could require a minimum volunteer number, not for on-duty staffing, but a number of memberships, with preset qualifications as part of the contract. Along with that, the contract should also establish minimum standards for officers and chief officers.

Recommendation: The Town and the Two Departments should enter into contracts that describe and formalize the relationship between the three entities. These contracts should be renewed annually between the parties, allowing for changes in the relationships or other issues to be addressed through the contracts on a timely basis. A copy of a recommended base contract is provided in Appendix A.

2. SHOULD THE RELATIONSHIPS BE MORE FORMALIZED BETWEEN THE TOWN AND FIRE SERVICES? IS A FULL TIME PAID FIRE PROFESSIONAL NECESSARY TO ASSURE A SAFE AND PROGRESSIVE OPERATION? IF SO SHOULD IT BE A TOWN EMPLOYEE? WHAT DUTIES SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE POSITION: ADMINISTRATIVE OR OPERATIONAL?

In conjunction with the recommendation to pursue a contractual relationship, the Town should hire an individual to oversee the delivery of EMS and fire services. This individual's title is not the important part, but as an example he/she could be titled Fire

Services Director. This person would be responsible for assuring compliance to all national standards, compliance with any contract(s) for service, administrative oversight and budget request oversight. Another responsibility of the position would be to ensure compliance with all state and federal requirements for reporting -- not to actually prepare these reports, but to ensure compliance. This individual would need a background in public administration and preferably a background in the fire/EMS service. This should be a Town employee, doing administrative oversight of the EMS and fire agency(s). The actual operations would be left to the entity(ies) contracted to provide the service. Clear lines of authority and separation are needed. It should be considered a conflict of interest if this Town employee was a volunteer or employee in any organization he/she would be required to oversee. This individual would have no authority to respond to or operate at any emergency scene or operation or to interfere with operations of the agency(ies). The focus of this position is not on cost-control alone. This position is also intended to provide the Town with an individual who is focused primarily on maintain the Town's best interests. Consultation with the Town Manager indicates that a typical Department Director would be compensated \$70,000 annually plus benefits. Assuming an average of 20 hours per week, the project team estimates that the total cost will be \$35,000 in salary and an additional \$10,000 in benefit costs (with no health insurance).

Recommendation: The Town should retain a part-time Fire Services Director position to assist with the administration of fire and EMS services in the Town. The estimated cost of this position is \$42,000 in salary and part-time benefits.

3. WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF THE CURRENT APPROACH?

The biggest strength of the current approach to fire and EMS in Coventry is that it is meeting community expectations for services. Fires are suppressed and patients are cared for in accordance with the rules and regulations stipulated by the OEMS.

The major weakness in the current system is the overall lack of accountability for total funds utilized to provide these services. With two organizations, there is a mentality that all expenditures must be matched. Where one Department gets something the other believes that it should automatically get the same thing or something of similar value. As an example, during our meetings with the rank and file, more than one individual acknowledged that the NCFD needed a new station, but also wanted to know what CVFA was going to get in return. The reality is fire suppression is a taxpayer funded service in Coventry and it is incumbent on the Town administration to achieve the best possible service at a reasonable cost.

The major weakness in the current approach is that it doesn't allow for the Town to have direct control over qualifications of individuals or final say of who will be leading the organization. By establishing a contract for service, as described previously, the Town has the opportunity to write the specifications exactly as they would like them to be, including, having final approval of chief officer selection, qualifications of personnel and minimums that must be met in order to continue the contract.

Topic	Findings
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of volunteer participation in both the CVFA and the NCFD. • Through the CVFA, the Town has duty-crews for EMS transport and a contractual agreement to provide advance life support intercept service. • The NCFD specializes in more technical rescue with Dive Team support coming from CVFA. • All calls are answered and dispatched from the same location.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current financial system is not transparent. • Separation of fire and EMS funding streams presents financial challenges to the Town for making grants for fire suppression. • NCFD stations both present significant challenges in terms of their usefulness as fire / rescue facilities. • There is no regular training between the two Fire Departments. • No specific standards in place for selecting Chiefs or Officers.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize the reconstruction of a new NCFD facilities (or facilities) to promote more geographic distribution of ambulance resources and to encourage more closely coordinated training and administration of the two Departments. • Utilize a Town Fire Services Director to oversee the administrative aspects of fire / EMS service delivery in the Town. • Utilize a contract for services between the Town and the two Departments to strengthen and formalize these key relationships.
Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major threats as the current system exists outside typical fire / EMS response considerations.

This basic SWOT analysis, requested by the Town, shows that the majority of issues revolve around the current organizational structure of the Town's fire / EMS services.

4. WHAT MINIMUM STANDARDS SHOULD BE SET FOR TRAINING BY RANK?

The National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) has set the standards of professional requirements for career and volunteer fire Departments. These standards,

while not law, have been adopted by many of America's fire organizations and in essence have become the standard that all are measured against.

The standards, listed below, represent a list of the NFPA standards needed as a minimum for fire personnel involved in the volunteer fire service.

<u>NFPA 450</u>	Guide for Emergency Medical Services and Systems
<u>NFPA 472</u>	Standard for Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials/Weapons of Mass Destruction Incidents
<u>NFPA 1000</u>	Standard for Fire Service Professional Qualifications Accreditation and Certification Systems
<u>NFPA 1001</u>	Standard for Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications
<u>NFPA 1002</u>	Standard for Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications
<u>NFPA 1021</u>	Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications
<u>NFPA 1026</u>	Standard for Incident Management Personnel Professional Qualifications
<u>NFPA 1142</u>	Standard on Water Supplies for Suburban and Rural Fire Fighting
<u>NFPA 1201</u>	Standard for Providing Emergency Services to the Public
<u>NFPA 1401</u>	Recommended Practice for Fire Service Training Reports and Records
<u>NFPA 1451</u>	Standard for a Fire Service Vehicle Operations Training Program
<u>NFPA 1500</u>	Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program
<u>NFPA 1720</u>	Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments

As you review the list, it is important to understand the past practice of appointing Chief Officers by popular election should be modified so the Town has some influence over these key appointments. The question raised by the Ad-hoc committee regarding rank standards of training is imperative. Qualified personnel should be trained and groomed for these positions. Regardless of career or volunteer personnel, they are indeed held accountable to these and other standards. Across the nation, volunteers have risen to these challenges.

In short, the following types of requirements should be set forth for personnel providing fire services in the Town (EMS services qualifications are dictated by the State's OEMS):

Position	Qualifications
Firefighter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefighter I after 1st year – and before allowed to respond to fires. • Firefighter II after 2nd year – and before allowed to respond to fires and to work as an internal structural firefighter. • Rescue training for conducting vehicle extrications and basic rescue operations. • Hazardous materials response training.
Lieutenant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above qualifications. • Fire Officer 1 before appointment to this rank.
Captain / Chief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the above qualifications. • Fire Officer 2 before appointment to this rank.

The Departments have set standards for some of the officer positions, but these should be a starting point and both Departments should place a heavy emphasis on training the “next generation” of leaders. For example, the Town should require that all officers be trained at least to the level of “Fire Officer 1” as defined by the NFPA. This will provide an officer who is well-versed in fire operations, training, basic inspections and basic plan review fundamentals.

Recommendation: The Town should, through the contract, exert some sign-off or approval authority over Chief and Officer selections. Officers should be required to obtain key certifications for skills and administrative capabilities. All personnel should be required to obtain the level of Firefighter II.

5. WHO SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OSHA AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE?

Best practice would indicate that the Town has a responsibility that their contractors adhere to the prescribed policies and standards. However, as separate level entities, both of the Fire Departments are responsible for complying with OSHA and other regulatory directions and laws. Ensuring compliance would fall under the newly created Public Safety Director. This person would be charged with enforcing compliance to recognized standards that are applicable to the contract agency(ies).

This would be done by agency(ies) filing of timely reports (standardized if multiple agencies) with penalties spelled out in the agreement(s) for failure to comply.

Recommendation: The two Fire Departments should, as distinct legal entities, maintain responsibility for complying with all regulatory requirements. The new Fire Services Director should provide assistance and should ensure that the Fire Departments are meeting all requirements to protect the Town from any liability.

6. SHOULD POLICIES ON MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT AND MEALS BE CONSISTENT?

The current approach to mileage reimbursement is fraught with potential problems. A base reimbursement for mileage is currently established on the mileage from each individual's home to the main station for their Fire Department. While this simplifies calculations, a reimbursement is designed to replace actual costs incurred by an individual. When a person responds from a location other than their residence are they being under or over compensated? It would be prudent to verify what if any of the excess being paid is taxable.

Also providing meals in lieu of payment for time spent at a station might also be judged as compensation. While the volunteers "work" for non-profit agencies that contract with the Town, they are being paid with general fund tax dollars and could be considered employees. The relevant language from the IRS is provided, below:

"Volunteer firefighters are considered employees and their remuneration is generally subject to all withholding taxes. However, if the payment is a nominal reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses actually incurred, AND the payment is accounted for according to the requirements of Reg. 1.62-2 regarding accountable plans, then the payment could be excludable from the rest of the firefighter's Form W-2."¹

The reimbursement schedule, if continued, should be consistent, and based on actual mileage using a log or receipts for actual expenses on submitted receipts and the

¹ Internal Revenue Service Federal, State and Local Governments, Public Employers Outreach Guide February 2007

Town's legal counsel should verify if it constituents' salary. The Town should encourage both agencies to provide volunteers with appropriate documentation accounting for their mileage reimbursements and meals. These should also be accompanied by a certified letter from the Chief or Chair of the Board of each Department verifying their volunteer status.

While the Town has no ability to dictate reimbursement policies, per se, to the two Departments, this can be addressed in the budget setting process by establishing what the Town believes to be appropriate reimbursement, and using past experience as a way of setting this line item. These policies can and should be addressed in the recommended contract.

Recommendation: The reimbursement for mileage and other expenses should be based on actual incurred expenses, not on estimates from home to headquarters. All volunteers should be provided with appropriate tax forms and a letter from the Chief or Board Chair from their Department verifying their volunteer status each year.

7. WHAT ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AREN'T BEING ACCOMPLISHED? SHOULD A VOLUNTEER BE EXPECTED TO UNDERTAKE THESE TASKS?

With the current configuration, the Town has no liability regarding administrative tasks associated with the fire service or ambulance service. The project team verified that all reporting requirements to OEMS are being provided and that the State Fire Marshal's Office reports for both agencies are compliant. The only question would be the proper reporting for the IRS for funds and other remuneration in lieu of pay to the fire/EMS crews.

It is incumbent on the present agencies' administration to maintain compliance with all state and federal reporting. Leaders of volunteer fire and EMS providers are





required by law to maintain compliance. Both Departments have submitted the current quarterly report to the Town's Fire Marshal.

The remaining administrative issue is related to the expenditure of Town funds. The current approach provides each agency with a grant of monies. This provides the Town with limited information as to how the grants are actually being expended by the two Departments. Assisting with these administrative tasks could be one of the roles assigned to the Fire Services Director should the Town choose to implement that recommendation in the future.

Recommendation: Through the contract or other means, the Town should cease the provision of lump-sum grants to the two Departments. In general, all expenditures should be processed through the Town's purchasing and accounts payable functions.

8. HOW SHOULD CHANGE, IF ANY, BE IMPLEMENTED TO ASSURE CONTINUATION OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE?

The cadre of volunteers in the Town of Coventry has a long history of public service. These are dedicated people who ask only that the residents support them and give them the tools to adequately continue their mission. With that in mind, the core of volunteers will continue to rise to the challenge and opportunity to serve their community. The three options below rely heavily on the continuing service of these volunteers. The question is more of how will the administration of the fire service look in the future.

The project team has recommended, previously, that the Town pursue the development and adoption of formal contracts between the Town and the two Departments. Implementation of these contracts with a focus on maintaining the

volunteer cadre in both agencies is critical for the Town. To that end, the project team recommends the following:

- The Town Manager and Council Chair should personally approach both Departments to encourage the two Departments to participate in the contracting process.
- A committee comprised of the Town Manager, Council Chair, another Council member, Finance Director, Town Counsel and others should work closely to finalize the initial contract offer to the two Departments.
- The Town should insist that the contract be the same for the interaction with both Departments. This will eliminate any risk that the contract can be viewed as a venue for treating one Department more favorably than the other. To that end, negotiations should be held between the Town and both Departments concurrently.
- The Town should also reach out to the membership of both Departments. Emphasis should be placed on the Town's concern regarding key issues, including:
 - Professionalism of Chiefs and Officers.
 - Improved training between the two Departments.
 - Overall focus on volunteer safety, including the training mentioned above.
- Underscore that the new position of Fire Services Director is to focus on administrative and budgetary issues, and that this position is not the Town's "Fire Chief."

Recommendation: The Town and key leadership should focus on working closely with the leadership of both Departments and with the volunteer cadres from both Departments to affect the contracting between the Town and the Departments. This close working relationship will be critical to ensure that volunteer participation does not drop off leading up to and following this critical change.

9. THE CVFA IS THE SOLE PROVIDER OF EMS ACCORDING TO THE STATE OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (OEMS).

The CVFA holds the primary service assignment from the Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS). Short of negligence or documented failure to perform, the Town has no authority to alter this relationship. While this is independent of the contract

between Coventry and the CVFA for ambulance service, there is nothing that requires the Town to augment or support this endeavor. Note the following points:

- The current contract states (Section 2.11) that “the Association (CVFA) shall make provisions for the physical garaging of ambulance and EMT vehicles within existing fire buildings.” Nothing in this section precludes the Town from specifying that CVFA is to utilize the substation for this sole purpose.
- Under Section 3 Duties and Covenants of Coventry (Town) Section 3.2 should be eliminated as this is already granted by State OEMS.
- Section 3.3 should be eliminated as this is a cost of providing ambulance service to the Town.
- Section 3.4 should also be eliminated as Coventry should not be providing coverage for Worker’s Compensation as these members are not employees or agents of the Town of Coventry as stated in Section 7.
- Section 3.5 should be completely rewritten as it calls for the Town to cover all additional expenses beyond revenue recovery without specifying a cap or what expenses are covered.

The Town should mandate that EMS be provided exclusive and independently from any fire service provided by the same agency. Personnel can belong to both entities, but should only perform EMS while riding on the squad and fire related duties while on duty with the Fire Department. Clear boundaries need to be identified and a clearer picture of the true expenses of providing EMS to the Town be documented.

The contract for the use of the stations between Coventry and the CVFA does not mention EMS delivery except for the substation agreement that requires the Town to allow the CVFA to maintain its ambulances at the substation (Section 4.b) while purchase of the property is negotiated. With very little modification, the EMS branch can be moved to the sub-station immediately.

Recommendation: The Town should work with both Departments to re-deploy EMS duty crews. In order to move one to the NCFD’s main station location, renovation or new construction will be required.

10. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF VOLUNTEERS IS WORKING WELL IN THE TOWN OF COVENTRY UNDER THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENT.

There is an adequate number of volunteers in the Town to respond to emergencies regardless of time of day with approximately 127 volunteers between the two agencies. These volunteers have, in some cases, agreed to work as duty crews in the station in order to reduce the reflex time for emergency calls. This practice has a significant benefit for emergency response in the Town by placing personnel in the station(s) and thereby reducing the total response time without the cost of paying personnel. With the volume of EMS calls, this practice should be continued for the ambulance service. By keeping the tours of duty to 8 hours maximum, bunk facilities would not be needed. This would allow the use of the substation for EMS and the use of the spaces in the current main station as administrative and training space for the NCFD.

Most volunteers work during the day and night time emergency response is not an issue. If members choose to staff the station overnight, they could simply utilize the dedicated time for training and or equipment maintenance. The practice of having fire personnel and fire police on duty is not needed considering the call volume. Responding the apparatus with a single person is a dangerous practice that should be eliminated. No fire apparatus should leave the station to respond to an emergency call without proper staffing. All personnel should respond to the station, not the scene and man the apparatus. This allows the company officer to understand the personnel he/she has and their capabilities saving valuable time once on the scene and reduces the number of vehicles at the emergency scene as well.

Training with any emergency force is paramount – and this is particularly true of volunteers who do not get on-duty opportunities to practice their skills. The NFPA requirements are spelled out and training must be well documented and only qualified personnel should be allowed on scene. With increased training comes more time needed from the volunteers away from their families. One of the major and growing challenges to the volunteer fire service are the requirements for more training and increasing time commitments. We have seen this nation-wide in the EMS service where minimum qualifications have been around much longer than in the fire service.

Every question of volunteer retention will eventually lead to compensation. This materializes with some sort of savings/retirement plan, property tax rebate, cost reimbursement and/or meals for on duty personnel. Regardless of what this compensation is called, it is, in fact, compensation. In order to maintain the available personnel, satisfaction and being appreciated for the job they perform is the minimum payment for services. Feeding on duty crews and reimbursing members for their expenses is a beginning and appears adequate to retain those who take part in these options. Additionally, the CVFA has provided exercise programs and equipment to assist personnel to remain in physical condition to safely perform their jobs. The CVFA has made the use of this equipment available to members of the NCFD as well.

Recommendation: The Town should continue to support the efforts of the two Departments to attract and retain volunteers. Current initiatives seem to be working well. Additional focus should be placed on training and safety, as discussed previously.

11. BUDGETING BETWEEN THE TWO AGENCIES IS WIDELY DISPARATE AND SHOULD BE ADDRESSED ANNUALLY.

The 2007-2008 funding to NCFD and the CVFA shows a wide disparity of funding. The data from the most recent budget year are provided, below:

CVFA		NCFD	
CVFA Main Station	\$159,263	NCFD Main Station	\$88,290
CVFA Sub-Station	14,810	NCFD Sub-Station	\$18,425
Direct Grant to CVFA	\$174,073	NCFD Rescue	\$18,850
Contracts / Direct Pays		Total	\$125,565
Paramedic Fee	\$9,142		
Pensions	27,000		
Physicals	12,000		
Tolland Dispatch	33,700		
Total Contract / Direct	\$81,842		

Note that the Town provides direct grants to the two Departments in the total of \$174,000 and \$125,000 annually to the CVFA and the NCFD respectively.

The Town's Fire Services Director should take a close look and engage in ongoing cost review related to both Departments. The Town should exercise its right to require an independent audit be completed, at Town expense, of both agencies and all budgetary items. The Town's bid for services indicated that this additional work would cost between \$10,000 and \$15,000. This should show exactly where the tax payer money is going enabling Town staff to determine if it is being utilized appropriately.

Going forward, if the Town chooses to maintain the current system, a budget meeting should be conducted with both Departments together to determine where cuts can be made and what increases in funding, if any, would make the most sense. This joint process will allow for better prioritization of funding needs in the Town's public safety services.

Recommendation: The Town should exercise its right to audit the finances of both Departments in conjunction with the new Town audit. Budget setting should be made in joint consultation between both agencies.

Appendix A

AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT is made this ___ day of _____, 2008, by and between the TOWN OF COVENTRY, a municipal corporation of and in the State of Connecticut, hereinafter designated as COVENTRY, and XXX FIRE DEPARTMENT a non-profit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Connecticut, hereinafter designated as DEPARTMENT.

WHEREAS, the DEPARTMENT has for many years provided necessary and valuable fire protection services within the Town of COVENTRY;

AND WHEREAS, the parties believe that the most feasible way to ensure the continuation of fire protection service to the inhabitants of the Town of COVENTRY is for COVENTRY, through property taxes, to pay for the majority of the expense thereof.

NOW THEREFORE:

The parties do covenant and agree as follows:

1. **SERVICES:** The DEPARTMENT, as an independent contractor, agrees to provide fire protection and emergency medical rescue services as may be appropriate to and for the benefit of the properties and inhabitants in the Town of COVENTRY. It is understood that the DEPARTMENT will continue to be a volunteer organization and that the nature and level of its services will be that which the DEPARTMENT is providing at the present time.

2. **FUNDING:** COVENTRY shall raise funds for the costs and expenses of operating and maintaining the DEPARTMENT in accordance with the procedures and subject to the limitations hereinafter set forth:

a. **Budget:** Each year on or before December 1st the DEPARTMENT shall prepare and submit to the Town Manager of COVENTRY a proposed budget approved by the DEPARTMENT setting forth the anticipated expenditures by the DEPARTMENT for the ensuing calendar year. Thereafter, the Town Manager shall review the proposed budget with the Department at a meeting so that the Town Manager may arrive at a DEPARTMENT budget approved by them (which shall include such amounts as the Town Manager deem appropriate for a Capital Fund) and a proposed appropriation for the DEPARTMENT for such calendar year, to be submitted to the Town Council in March. The TOWN and DEPARTMENT agree that an annual Capital Fund appropri-

ation is preferable to large funding requests whenever a capital purchase is made. The Town Manager shall endeavor to include annually in the Department budget approved by them a reasonable amount for the Capital Fund.

b. Limitations of COVENTRY's Funding Obligation: COVENTRY shall have no responsibility to fund or pay for the DEPARTMENT's costs and expenses in any year over and above amounts actually approved by the voters, and if the Town Council does not approve the amount submitted by the Town Manager, COVENTRY's only responsibility shall be to disburse funds for the operation of the DEPARTMENT to the extent of the funds voted for operating expenses and to disburse to any Capital Fund to the extent of funds voted for capital purchases, provided however, that if the DEPARTMENT's operating expenditures in any year exceed the amount voted by the Town Council for operating expenses due to unforeseen or emergency purchase requirements, the Town Council shall fund a reasonable amount of such overage, if Town funds are available, taking into consideration the needs of Town departments, and provided further that COVENTRY shall not be required to disburse funds in or designated for any Capital Fund (Paragraph 4e), for operating expenses.

c. Except for the Capital Fund (Paragraph 4e), all such funds approved by the Town Council shall be part of the Town General Fund, including any unexpended funds at the end of the year.

d. Department Fund Raising: In any community fund raising solicitation, the DEPARTMENT shall make clear that its operating needs and the majority of its Capital needs are being met with tax dollars, and that such additional funds as are being raised are to be used for purposes beyond and in addition to the DEPARTMENT's routine fire protection and emergency medical response services. The DEPARTMENT shall report annually to COVENTRY fully itemizing all its receipts from fund raising, and all its expenditures of such funds as of December 31st.

3. **BOOKKEEPING**: COVENTRY will keep and maintain the DEPARTMENT's operating budget bookkeeping, using such accounting system as the Town Manager uses for Town departments. The DEPARTMENT shall keep books and records of all its receipts and disbursements, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The books and records of either party required hereunder shall be available for inspection by the other at reasonable times and places. COVENTRY shall maintain the right to audit, at its own expense, the expenditures of the DEPARTMENT using a third party auditor or otherwise.

4. **DISBURSEMENT OF MONIES**: COVENTRY shall pay to or for the benefit of the DEPARTMENT the costs and expenses of operating and maintaining the DEPARTMENT, subject to the limitations in Paragraph 2 above, and in accordance with the procedures and subject to the limitations hereinafter set forth:

a. Designation of Agent: The DEPARTMENT shall, by writing signed by its President, annually designate an agent with authority to submit DEPARTMENT requests to COVENTRY for payment. The DEPARTMENT may change that agent from time to time by a similar writing. The submission of a payment request by that agent shall be deemed a representation by the DEPARTMENT that the payment by COVENTRY of the amount requested is authorized by the

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DEPARTMENT and proper in all respects; COVENTRY in disbursing on that payment request may conclusively rely on that representation.

b. Disbursements: COVENTRY shall make disbursements directly to the DEPARTMENT's creditors for operation and capital replacement expenses, provided the total amount thereof is within the amount herein required to be disbursed under Paragraph 2 above and in accordance with the following procedures:

(1) The DEPARTMENT shall submit a purchase order signed by the agent, the form thereof to be determined by the Counsel Members consistent with purchase order forms used by Town departments.

(2) Within 15 days of submission or within two days if an emergency repair the purchase order shall be reviewed and approved by the Town Manager and Town Council, depending upon whichever has the authority to approve consistent with general Town purchasing procedures.

(3) The DEPARTMENT shall purchase the item.

(4) The DEPARTMENT shall submit an invoice for the purchase, approved by the DEPARTMENT's agent and COVENTRY shall pay the invoice directly to the DEPARTMENT's creditor for the purchase.

(5) Subparagraph 1 and 2 above relevant to purchase orders shall not apply to routine purchases for gas, oil, electricity, and the like.

c. Sources of Supply: The DEPARTMENT officials shall consult with COVENTRY officials from time to time about purchases, and about all capital expenditures, so that COVENTRY at its option may take advantage of any savings resulting from its purchasing power, by making purchases itself for the benefit of the DEPARTMENT, under such procedures as the Counsel Members may deem appropriate. However, all purchase and projects shall meet the specifications determined by the DEPARTMENT. In general it is understood that the DEPARTMENT will try to limit its major capital requests to the last half of the year.

d. Capital Budget Plan: Each year on or before December 1st the DEPARTMENT shall prepare and submit to the Counsel Members of COVENTRY a revised 20-year Capital Budget Plan which is a tool to estimate capital funding approved by the DEPARTMENT members setting forth the anticipated capital acquisitions by the DEPARTMENT for the next twenty years, including the particular capital needs of the DEPARTMENT for the ensuing calendar year. If at any time during the year the DEPARTMENT contemplates a capital acquisition different from

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that contained in the adopted Capital Budget Plan, the Plan shall be revised and submitted to the Counsel Members pursuant to subparagraph e below.

e. Capital Fund: COVENTRY shall establish a separate Capital Fund into which shall be deposited any amounts appropriated by the voters and designated for that fund. All amounts in the Capital Fund, including accrued interest earned, shall be available for the purpose of making DEPARTMENT capital acquisitions. Disbursements shall be made from the Capital Fund by COVENTRY directly to the seller, for the benefit of the DEPARTMENT, in accordance with the procedures set forth in subparagraphs 4b and 4c above.

In addition, the following procedures shall be followed prior to submission of a purchase order request pursuant to 4b(1) above. The DEPARTMENT officials shall present to COVENTRY officials at the beginning of their planning process for any capital acquisition a revised DEPARTMENT Capital Budget Plan showing the proposed purchase and its impact upon the Plan, a general outline establishing the scope and description of the capital purchase and an estimated price range which will be used to develop detailed specifications for the purchase. Any proposed trade-in, prepayment credits, DEPARTMENT funding assistance, or other potential financial mechanism that may impact the purchase price shall be clearly identified to COVENTRY officials at this time.

Upon any sale, transfer, or other disposition of a vehicle or other capital acquisition purchased in whole or in part with Capital Fund monies, or upon the receipt of insurance proceeds on account of the total loss (as defined in the DEPARTMENT's insurance policy) of any such vehicle or other capital acquisition, the net sale proceeds or net fire insurance proceeds to the extent of Capital Fund monies used for the capital acquisition shall be turned over to COVENTRY and deposited in the Capital Fund. When COVENTRY makes a disbursement from the Capital Fund for the acquisition of a vehicle, the distributor, dealer, etc., shall execute and deliver to COVENTRY a Certificate of Origin for a Vehicle if a new vehicle, or a Transfer of Title Certificate if a used vehicle, and such other appropriate documents, in the names of both the DEPARTMENT and COVENTRY. In the case of the trade-in of a vehicle, COVENTRY shall transfer its title provided a new Certificate of Origin for a Vehicle or Transfer of Title Certificate covering the replacement vehicle is executed and delivered upon the same terms as set forth above.

f. Ownership of Property: Title to all vehicles or other capital acquisition acquired in whole or in part with Capital Fund monies shall be in the names of the DEPARTMENT and COVENTRY and both names shall be shown on the Certificate of Title or such other appropriate documents. Notwithstanding the above, the DEPARTMENT shall be solely responsible for the maintenance and operation of these vehicles and shall in their sole discretion determine whether a vehicle is suitable for DEPARTMENT usage at any time. The DEPARTMENT shall maintain liability and collision insurance on these vehicles in the amounts equal to that which COVENTRY maintains on its vehicles or to some lesser amount if satisfactory to COVENTRY.

- g. **Contract Termination, Title to Capital Fund:** If upon termination of this Agreement for any cause there is unexpended money in the Capital Fund, COVENTRY shall continue to hold that money in the Capital Fund account, and shall from time to time make disbursements for capital acquisitions at the request of the DEPARTMENT under the procedures, terms and conditions set forth in paragraph 4e above, and this provision shall continue in effect notwithstanding termination of this Agreement.
5. **NO AGENCY CREATED:** No officer, employee or member of the DEPARTMENT shall be deemed an agent of COVENTRY by reason of any provision of this Agreement, nor by performing any of the duties imposed upon the DEPARTMENT by this Agreement, nor in performing any fire fighting or other DEPARTMENT functions. In addition, no official or employee of COVENTRY shall be deemed an agent of the DEPARTMENT by reason of any provision of this Agreement, nor by performing any of the duties imposed upon COVENTRY by this Agreement.
6. **TERM - CANCELLATION:** The term of this Agreement shall commence January 1, 2008, and shall end December 31, 2008, unless earlier terminated as hereinafter provided. Either party may terminate this Agreement effective December 31 of any year, provided written notice of termination is given at least One Hundred Twenty Days (120) prior to such termination date.
7. **DISSOLUTION OF DEPARTMENT:** Notwithstanding paragraph 6, this Agreement shall terminate upon dissolution of the DEPARTMENT and upon any dissolution, whether during or at any time following the term of this Agreement, the DEPARTMENT shall transfer all its assets, real and personal, purchased with funds provided through COVENTRY property tax dollars, to COVENTRY, subject, however, to acceptance of such transfer by the voters at a duly warned meeting.
8. **ASSIGNABILITY:** This Agreement shall not be assignable, in whole or in part, by the DEPARTMENT without the Town Manager's written approval.
9. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This Agreement shall become effective upon signing by both parties.
10. **AMENDMENT:** This Agreement may be amended from time to time by mutual agreement of the parties upon the approval of such amendment by both of the following:
- a. The members of the DEPARTMENT at a duly called membership meeting.
 - b. The Town Council at a regular or special meeting.

TOWN OF COVENTRY

Witnesses:

TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.

Witnesses:

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY
