

FIRE DEPARTMENT CONSOLIDATION, A VIEW FROM THOSE EFFECTED

School of Fire Staff and Command

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An applied research project submitted to Eastern Michigan University as part of the Fire
Staff and Command program

August 2001

ABSTRACT

As we gain momentum into the Twenty-first Century, we are realizing that our booming economy is slowing down. This realization is not only being seen at home, but in our local governments as well. When the economy slows down, citizens look for ways to save money & pay closer attention to the way their money is being spent. With this in mind, local governments need to spend the money of the people more wisely. Failure to do so will open them up for scrutiny & the risk of losing precious tax money that is needed to run the community.

The fire service needs to look into the future and put plans in place to prepare for cutbacks & budget restraints. A possible plan to consider is fire department consolidation. For years, cities & townships have provided their service as individual departments servicing a set boundary. We continue to duplicate a service that can be performed by one department.

The purpose of this research paper is to introduce the question of consolidation to those it effects most. I surveyed local governments, fire service leaders & citizens of select communities to get their viewpoints. I discovered that the advantages of consolidation were all well recognized, however, the level of service being provided along with job security and identity were a great concern to the citizens, government leaders & the employees.

Literature reviews were done on more than a half dozen writings from those who have been involved with a consolidation process. Interviews were conducted with fire chiefs that have

been through consolidation, as well as those who represent departments that may consolidate in the future. Discussions on how people view the advantages and disadvantages in terms of cost savings while providing a progressively better service was the main focus of this research.

Based upon the information gathered from this study, it is recommended that when considering consolidation as a way to cut cost and prepare for economic slow downs, we must consider how we effect the people involved. There will be questions in regards to the level of service being provided, job security and the need to consolidate. We as fire executives must prepare ourselves to answer these questions.

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INTRODUCTION

The consolidation of fire departments in almost any community would mean cost savings for the taxpayers. Savings in

construction, administrative personnel, equipment, apparatus, staffing, and training are just a few of the areas where a savings would be seen. These are also key areas where an improvement in service would prove vital to the newly organized department.

Common needs and services throughout communities must be recognized by all fire executives as well as the elected community leaders and citizens. The effects of combining services will have a different emotional impact on all involved, however, the economic savings will be mutually felt between everyone. This research paper will look at the emotional viewpoints from an economic and non-economic aspect of those involved as well as how those involved view the value in the level of service that is being provided.

Most of the information for this research paper was gathered from literature at the National Fire Academy's learning resource center and the electronic library of databases here at Eastern Michigan University's Hale Library. A survey was conducted from over thirty-five fire department officials, interviews and discussions were conducted from everyday citizens, fire chiefs who have been through a consolidation in their community and of fire chiefs who's community is ideal for consolidation.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

In order to look at consolidation with a clear perspective mind, we must start thinking outside of the box, and understand that alternative ways in doing things do exist. In doing so we

will create change, as we all know, introducing change is not all that easy. Most of us are comfortable where we are and to change what seems not to be broken doesn't interest us.

The demand for us to maintain a high level of service and the demand to reduce cost in providing these services are being seen more and more by communities. Consolidation is nothing new to those who have been involved in the fire service over the past forty-five or so years. These ideas have been around for some time now. Some departments consolidated in the early 1960's and have been gaining from their effort ever since. While there has been a great interest in consolidation throughout the country, fear, uncertainty and the political arena has made it uncomfortable for most involved. Some of the un-answered questions such as who will be in charge, will the services remain the same or how will we adjust tax revenue and millage money has made it easier to leave this subject alone rather than to take it on and find out the true answers.

Next to life safety, property conservation and incident stabilization, efficiency and effectiveness in providing a quality service that meets the needs of our communities must be our overriding concern. We have to explore the benefits of consolidation and communicate those benefits back out to the agencies and communities. To provide a constant level of service, a more secure and stable funding foundation, a uniform level of training and eliminate duplication are just a few of the benefits that will surely outweigh the fears we have. If we are going to be successful in dealing with the beliefs and emotions from those

involved, we have to educate them first. Utilizing an open means of communication will be one of the most efficient ways to do this. Creating a strategic plan that address the fears and benefits prior to introducing the concept will prove beneficial. It will allow for us to explain the true motive and enable us to cross out the perception of were just taking over to gain control in the minds of those it effects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In researching information for my paper, I used articles from authors on file in the learning center at the National Fire Academy. I also chose to do personal interviews. Some were with Fire Chiefs who have been through the consolidation process, and others were with Fire Chiefs who's department would be ideal for consolidation. Other information was obtained through discussion with citizens in the community.

The articles I reviewed for this research paper outline the clear benefits that are obtained from consolidation. These benefits are advantageous to more than just the taxpayer, but also to the departments effected and the local government. There was an emphasis placed on the roles of fire departments in the way they handle their business with the growing demand for service without additional cost to the community. ¹William A Jones, III captures a quote in his article from Stephanie

¹ William A Jones, III, *Consolidation – A Change In the 21st Century For the Town of Barnstable?* (Barnstable Fire Department Massachusetts) '94

Thompson, who wrote "Seeking to provide taxpayers with more for their money, fire departments are teaming up to get the job done."

Of the articles I read, most asked the question, Why consolidate? I was unable to find a clear-cut answer to this question. Every department and jurisdiction would have their own reasons for why they should or shouldn't consolidate. Some are as a result from concerned citizens who want to explore the option of consolidation. Others have been directed by the elected officials in an attempt to beat the citizens to the punch. Being able to have hard core facts at hand, that address the citizen concerns and provide data that supports consolidation or that disproves the idea is key to some elected officials. This will allow them to provide answers based on facts and research, rather than shooting from the hip and risk appearing ignorant.

To consolidate presents a change in the normal way of doing business. We have learned that change doesn't come easy and is usually followed by resistance. All of my research confirmed that consolidation is a tough hurdle to jump, but it is a sensible choice that needs to be considered. When considering the issue, most of the articles I read suggest conducting a study or survey. These should be well thought out and well prepared in order to gather data that is accurate and not tilted to any one particular side.

In ²Sherman L. Lahie, JR's paper *Consolidation of Local Fire Departments, is it time?* He writes, "there are four primary considerations that each consolidation effort must pass through. They are basic resistance to change, autonomy and identification issues, inter-jurisdictional and political considerations, and employee issues". Although worded a bit different, I included these (and others) in my survey that I had filled out by fire department leaders. These were also discussed during the personal interviews I conducted. My survey and discussions were intended to gather data on the viewpoints and the way those involved would be effected.

I found that the average response to consideration on the importance of local control and identity (on a one to ten scale with ten being the most important) was eight. This seemed a bit high to me, however, these responses were followed up with concerns ranging from contractual issues, to work loads and of most concern to these individuals was that of who would be in charge. The most common and important concern to everyone I surveyed, was in the level of service being provided. No one was willing to accept a lesser level than what they already have.

The next major response that seemed to have a somewhat common answer was in regards to the employee attitudes. Most were concerned with job security and the fear of change. If you could assure the "troops" that a consolidation of departments would not mean the loss of jobs, there would be a feeling of relief, and

² Sherman L. Lahaie, Jr *Consolidation of Local Fire Departments, Is It Time? Strategic Analysis of Executive Leadership* (Deputy Administrator Maine Fire Training & Education Bangor, Main) '94

this would effect the attitude. Getting the employees to buy into the program will play a major role in making any consolidation successful. Addressing their issues on change would take some time. There would be some adjustments to make, but for the most part a consolidation wouldn't change the actual work so much as it would change the way and manner in which the work would be performed and who it was being performed with. The communication from the leaders in the department down the chain of command would be crucial in minimizing any resistance to the changes. Explaining the reason behind the action isn't what we as leaders are used to, however, this would have to become a common practice in order to dilute the rumors and grapevine issues that could make or break the whole consolidation process.

During my discussion with citizens, I asked many questions. The one that brought back the most common response was, What would be your major concern if the fire department in your community was to consolidate with the neighboring communities fire department? I honestly expected them to be concerned with how much money will the consolidation save them. What I found out though, was that they were much more concerned in the level of service remaining the same or improving. As long as they did not experience a decline in their current level of service, they were in favor of consolidation. Some even felt that they would be safer, knowing that the services being provided would possibly be an overall improvement to the current services they were accustomed to.

The first interview I did was with a Chief named Larry Groth. I chose Chief Groth because he has well over thirty-three years in the service (over twenty of them as a Fire Chief) and was a vital player in the consolidation of services between Plymouth City and Plymouth Township, now known as the Plymouth Area Fire Department. During my interview with Chief Larry Groth, I learned that the drivers for consolidation must come from the government officials it effects. He mentioned that the Plymouth Township Fire Department and the Plymouth City Fire Department had tossed the idea of consolidation around since the 1950's. It was brought to a head when in 1990 an elected official approached Chief Groth and told him it was time to see if a consolidation would or wouldn't work. With this elected officials interest and curiosity, a team was put together and they were able to put out an agreement that was an overall win-win for both communities.

I asked Chief Groth to discuss some of the feelings he was having in relation to job security, as there were two Chiefs and the newly formulated department would only need one. Chief Groth explained that as the whole project kicked off, the team explained to the two municipalities that all jobs must remain secure or this project would fail. He ultimately became the Fire Chief of the Plymouth Area Department, while the former Chief of the Plymouth City Department became the Assistant Chief.

Chief Groth explained that based on education, length of service and a few other formulas is how the position of Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief would be decided. It is important to note that neither of the two lost any pay or benefits. Chief

Groth and I discussed how the Assistant Chief felt about the selection process, and he said every one was in favor of the process. Afterwards though, the new Assistant Chief did show signs of bitterness and ended up retiring shortly afterwards.

I wanted to find out how the employees were effected, and what was done to keep them involved (if anything) during the process. Chief Groth told me that the best thing they did was communicate everything. They communicated with the two unions, the citizens and the media throughout the whole project. As a result of this, they were able to keep rumors and grapevine issues under control. He did mention that even though they did the best they could to keep everyone up to speed and for the most part "OK" with the consolidation, there were those who were resisting. Securing the jobs was a huge part in keeping most of them interested and in agreement with the project, however, the adaptation to change was just too much for some to handle. Some of the older individuals were being resistant to these new ideas and new way of doing business. Chief Groth made it clear during our interview that these types of individuals are able to and most likely will hinder a consolidation project. He advised me to find a way to get their buy in or find a way to get them out. That is what they did, they were able to offer a one time cash buy out retirement that enabled them to relieve themselves of those who were being resistant.

One of the many hurdles Chief Groth and the committee had to jump through was in dealing with the paid on call employees. They were effected with the fact that now there would be more full

time employees on duty, thus eliminating the need for them to show up at the station for runs. They were now only needed on scenes of the larger, working fires. Chief Groth said he was able to work with the greater part of the group, however, he did have three individuals who literally came into his office and dropped their gear at his desk. These individuals were unwilling to accept the results of change within the newly developed department. There was a control and identity issue that impacted them severely, so severely they gave themselves no chance at adapting to the changes and resigned.

There was yet another issue of concern to the members that in Chief Groth's mind was one of the easier ones to solve. That was in regards to how promotions would be handled. The employees and unions had grave concerns that their members had been recently through a promotional examination process that placed them on an eligibility list. The requirements, studying and hard work that go into passing these tests, along with the fear of missing a promotion were of concern to the two departments. Chief Groth had to answer the question of how was he going to handle promotions that would be fair to all involved.

Chief Groth and the committee decided the best way to handle this issue was to give it back to the two unions and allow them to find a solution. The Chief told the unions that they (the consolidation committee) were willing to accept any solution the two unions came up with. The end result was that there were two positions in which lists had been developed within the two departments prior to the consolidation. They were that of

Lieutenant and Captain. The solution that all agreed upon was that for the next Captain promotion they would work off the Plymouth Township list for their first choice, and then alternate between the lists for any future Captain promotions until the list expired. This same process was used in reverse for the Lieutenant promotion, selecting from the Plymouth City's list first and then alternating back and forth in the future. The process was of great success, as in the beginning the members feared that the hard work and the studying that is needed to score high on these test would have been thrown out the window.

In the last bit of discussion I had with Chief Groth, I wanted to know how the consolidation as a whole effected everyone involved. Chief Groth was quick to respond, saying that the level of service provided had went up with out a doubt. He said that a cost savings was definitely seen in capitol outlay, and that the purchasing power was also effected in a positive way. Chief Groth did mention that there were three complaints from residents of the City and zero from Township residents. "Communication was the key in keeping complaints to a minimum" Chief Groth Said. Overall Chief Groth feels that the consolidation of these two departments was the best thing that could of happened. He believes everyone involved had something to gain.

My next Chief interview was with Jack Loria of the Belleville City Fire Department. I chose to interview Chief Loria because he has over thirty years in the service and his department meets the criteria that is optimum for consolidation. Chief Loria told me that the idea of consolidating Belleville

Fire Department and Van Buren Township Fire department had been floating around for over ten years. He even stated that he himself had just been given the "OK" by his City Manager and the Mayor, to approach the Township and prepare a proposal on this subject.

I first asked Chief Loria what would be his greatest concern on the effects of consolidating these two departments. He said that the level of service and response times would make or break the project. He feels that the best way to consolidate these two departments (that are both paid on call departments) would be with the staffing of full time firefighters.

In order to get the ball rolling with in these two communities, Chief Loria sees the need for himself and Chief Smolen (Van Buren Fire Departments Chief) to sit down and prepare a proposal for the two government agencies. He said that if this idea was to ever get off the ground, he believes the two government agencies would have to fully support the issue. He also believes that this is something that needs to be done, and that once the ice is broken, things will fall into place.

Being that Chief Smolen is a full time fire chief for Van Buren and that Chief Loria is an on call paid member, I wanted to know how he felt about his job in the event a consolidation was to occur. Chief Loria believes that the person best suited for the job would be Chief Smolen. Keeping in mind that providing the best possible service to the community is the key ingredient in our job. Experience, education and the background to run a large department are qualifications Chief Smolen already has. Chief

Loria would have no resentful feelings in stepping aside and allowing the Van Buren Chief to run the department.

Chief Loria and I then discussed the effect on the "troops". Resentment was definitely an issue he felt would have to be addressed. There would be an identity issue that would need resolved and possibly the issue of jurisdiction, who would be in charge? Chief Loria agreed that communication would be a key in resolving most of these issues. Reminding these individuals that our goal is to provide a service to the community and was the reason most of them joined the department. He sees this as a way to help keep them focused, thus easing the pain and resentment that would be encountered.

He and I agreed that there would be a need for an adjustment for change. Some individuals would not be able or willing to make such an adjustment was evident with in his department, knowing what Chief Loria knows about his own members. Chief Loria stressed that reminding those members that the reason they joined was not for the money, the identity, or for the control. We must remind them that it was for the satisfaction in providing the community with Fire and EMS protection. If these members have strayed from this feeling, and they were unwilling to stay focused, eliminating them from the department would be in the shortcoming.

When asked how he thinks the community would feel about a consolidation, Chief Loria believes that most of the community isn't even aware that there are two separate departments. His experience has taught him that the Township residents are so

often referred to as Belleville, that they have become untaught to the fact that there is a separation in the two. Chief Loria mentioned that he has asked citizens how they would feel about the two departments consolidating. Overall and without a doubt, he is convinced that the citizens are most concerned with the level of service being provided. As long as it does not decrease from what they currently have, most seem to think it's a good idea. Chief Loria believes that the service would actually increase based on the diverse education and experience that would be combined.

PROCEDURES

Consolidation has always been a topic of interest to me. Being a Battalion Chief of a department that literally has one of its' stations in the center of another cities boundaries is truly mind boggling to me. I started this applied research project by talking to my Fire Chief. He too has questions and concerns with consolidation, and has expressed related concerns to those of mine, in the way we provide our services to the community.

In order to gather information on how consolidation is viewed by those it effects, I created a survey that is included in the appendix of this paper. This survey asked ten questions regarding consolidation. It was developed in a way that allowed me to capture answers from the viewpoint of those who answered it as an employee and as a taxpaying citizen. The survey was used to

get real viewpoints from real people who would be the ones who are actually effected in a consolidation. I felt their input was a key in trying to understand why there is an overall resistant and reluctant attitude towards consolidation.

In addition to surveys, I interviewed Fire Chief Larry Groth from Plymouth Michigan. I interviewed him because he was part of the process when Plymouth City and Plymouth Township consolidated. He was able to provide me with hands on experience in dealing with the viewpoints of everyone involved. I also interviewed Fire Chief Jack Loria of the Belleville City Fire Department. I chose to interview Chief Loria because his department is a prime candidate for consolidation.

I have included both sets of interview questions in the appendix of this paper. I felt that interviewing a Fire Chief who has been through a consolidation as well as one that hasn't, would be beneficial to my research and give me viewpoints from both sides.

Between interviews and the return of surveys, I did my literary review. This included reference materials from the learning resource center at the National Fire Academy. I also took advantage of the Indexes, internet and data base searches that Eastern Michigan Universities electronic library has to offer. In addition to these, I searched and reviewed various magazines and journals to find more data that related to consolidation views.

RESULTS

It is evident that consolidation is not a new idea in the Fire Service. It is a method that provides departments with an alternative way in addressing monetary restraints placed on us by the community and the elected officials. However, as I learned from my readings and interviews, money savings and budget restraints should not be the determining factor when considering consolidation. The level of service being provided must remain in focus at all times and how it effects the communities involved has to be the overriding priority. These two will work hand in hand and, if money can be saved and improving the level of service for the community is feasible, then consolidation should be considered.

Some of the other key factors to consider when looking into consolidation are that of the effects and attitudes of the employees involved. Job security is a key factor to those individuals. If a consolidation will result in the loss of jobs, you will not get the much needed, buy in support from the members. That is their greatest concern in the process and will present a roadblock for the communities involved if not properly handled.

Based upon the experiences of the Plymouth Area Fire Department, communication is the next key factor that must be put in place. Using the media, the unions and open meetings will allow for those who want to know, the opportunity to find out. Keeping everyone informed as best as possible, and never holding any information back will pay off in the end. Proper

communication will also induce participation from outside resources, this in itself can help validate the process and keep it from appearing to be one sided.

The answer to the question of how a consolidation effects those involved has lead me to learn there is more than one answer. Everyone involved sees this from a different viewpoint and bases their feelings from that viewpoint. Identity, level of service, control, and resentment are just some of the effects that will need addressed. The consolidation may end up being a hard change for some to swallow. The primary advantages will need to be weighed against the potential heartache and grief that is evident to exist.

Once a consolidated department is formed, there will be changes in the administrative support. There will be only a need for one Chief to oversee the whole department. This may mean the loss of a bugle for the neighboring Chief. As experienced in Plymouth, this initially may seem "OK" with everyone, but afterwards, bitterness and possibly jealousy did set in. The requirements on the official Chief of the department will require him/her to be a good juggler. Managing the employees involved, coordinating events with two political entities and ensuring consistency throughout will become a new way of life for this individual.

Overall I have learned that there are many advantages to consolidation verses the traditional means we are currently providing that effect most communities. Improving on response times, unified department operations in a community, greater

purchasing power and combining the resources and equipment are just a few. The savings to a community through the removal or reduction of duplicated services that are spread out across a larger area are another benefit. Most of all, the level of service that is provided will remain the most important and most beneficial benefit of all. Keeping a line of focus on our duty to provide the level of service our community wants, needs and deserves will make or break any effort to finalize a consolidation project. If the effects in this area are declining, this will be a negative effect that will be hard to overcome.

DISCUSSION

The results of my research were in line with the articles I read and the discussions I had on consolidation. The effects and concerns of those involved were consistent with the surveys and interviews I did. Chief Groth and Chief Loria both agreed that perhaps the most substantial piece of the puzzle in getting a consolidation project up and running was to get the involvement of the elected officials, prior to rolling out an action plan. This in conjunction with a solid committee will prove beneficial. If this cannot happen, then the whole project will more than likely be unsuccessful. Assistant Chief Gary E. Boyles sums this up well when he writes ³“If the political

³ Gary E. Boyles MPA, Consolidation of the Fire Services in San Bernardino County California: Creation of the San Bernardino County Fire Department (San Bernardino, California) “95

attitude is such that a consolidation should occur, then it most likely will”.

Given the opportunity to review papers from the National Fire Academy and the chance to survey leaders in the fire service, along with interviews of Citizens and Fire Chiefs, I learned that the concerns and effects are consistent no matter what department or area you are from. There is a definite stress on level of service, job security and the elimination of duplicated services across the country.

Although it was not the number one concern of anyone I came in contact with during my research, cost savings was on the list of improved effects that will be seen as a result of consolidation. The information I learned on improved levels of service, local identity, job security, refined operations, and the elimination of duplicated services were all consistent with the literature review I did.

As a result of the successful consolidations that have occurred throughout the Nation, more and more municipalities will have to face this issue sooner or later. Elected officials must prepare and educate themselves on this issue or they may face scrutiny in the future. We as Fire Service Leaders have to stay one step ahead of everyone involved, as we will be the ones selected to gather the data and be the ones who end up feeling and dealing with the effects that consolidation brings with it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that there is an opportunity to combine efforts, increase service and reduce cost within certain communities. No one stands alone in being asked to provide more for less, this is something that is a reality in most municipalities. All programs that can be put into place that will provide more at a lesser cost have to be looked into. Failure to do so will be detrimental to our careers in the future.

Communicating the advantages as well as the disadvantages that may occur with consolidation need to be discussed. There will be several hurdles to jump through and roadblocks to bust, many of these will be overcome with proper and well thought out communications. Anyone looking to consolidate in the future will have to be willing to get the media, unions, and citizens involved.

It would be a wise decision to formulate a list of concerns that will need to be addressed. At the top of the list, I would recommend that you place the concern in the level of service to the community in which you are effecting. In any event, all of the concerns should be handled in a way that agreeable and sensible solutions are obtained. Addressing each issue one on one with those it effects most will help in identifying these solutions.

If you are thinking about consolidation as a way in doing business in the future, you should envision what all it will entail. Whether it be a partial or full consolidation of services you must get the support from the government agencies that will be effected. The success of the project depends on this support.

The buy in from the employees its effects will be another make it or break it step you will have to take. Job security will be the major concern for these individuals. Once you secure these two groups you will have established a solid base that will support you throughout.

To be effective leaders in the fire service, we need to use our experience and education to aid us in thinking outside the box as we shape our future. Working towards a more responsive and efficient department that provides a high level of service needs to be a goal we set for ourselves when planning for the future. I am confident that my research has shown that the way people are effected and how they feel is more advantageous than disadvantageous for consolidation. One thing to keep in mind is that you will effect the lives of real people in the way they are served and the way they live. Handling this appropriately will be part of your formula for success. Every municipality is different in many ways, however, the way people feel about their service and their jobs is very common throughout the country. Asking anyone to accept less or to step aside will always be a delicate issue.

As a result, most departments that have been through a consolidation have also been through a one of a kind emotional process. A process that involves dealing with feelings, beliefs and disbelief of a diverse group of individuals isn't easy to handle. As a leader involved with this process, you will have to manage these emotions and be able to justify your actions. Be careful in setting a goal to make everyone happy, it just won't

happen. There are those who will resist no matter how hard you try to convince them to accept consolidation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Survey

1. Are you familiar with the concept of consolidation? **Y/N**
2. If consolidation was to be considered, who do you think should be involved in the decision process?

1. _____ 2. _____
 3. _____ 4. _____

3. As an employee of a fire department – what would be your top two greatest concerns if you found out your department was consolidating with your neighboring department?

1. _____
 2. _____

4. How important do you regard the matter of local control and identity?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 (1 being least important & 10 being very important)

5. Do you feel there are services in your area that are duplicated, and that could be consolidated? **Y/N**

6. How might consolidation effect your level of service? _____

7. How do you think the attitude within the “Troops” would be if they were told your department was going to consolidate with the neighboring departments?

8. As a community tax-payer – Would you favor consolidation as a way to cut your tax bill if your level of service did not go down? **Y/N**

9. As a tax paying citizen – what would be your greatest concern if you found out your fire department was being consolidated with an other?

10. What is your position or rank? _____

Appendix B

Interview questions of Fire Chiefs who have been through consolidation or are part of a department that has consolidated

1. How was the idea of consolidation brought up and who was the driver for the process?

2. What were the key factors that led to consolidation of the departments?
3. Describe any roadblocks, and how were they approached.
4. Were there surveys or any other form of data collection sent out to those it would effect with in the community (tax payers, elected officials, employees, etc...) to get their viewpoints?
 - ◆ If so, was there any information that played as a determining factor in making the decision to consolidate.
 - ◆ If not, would you recommend that surveys become a part of the process for departments who are exploring the option?
5. What were your personnel feelings and concerns throughout this process?
6. If known, what were the general feeling and concerns of your employees? The taxpayers? Elected officials?
7. Was there a moral issue with the employees?
8. Since the consolidation, has there been feed back on how things are going?
9. The research I have been doing shows that there are definite benefits that come with consolidation. Benefits such as:

Uniform training	Eliminating duplicated services
Central dispatch	Greater purchasing power

 - ◆ Have you experienced these as a benefit?
 - ◆ What other benefits have you seen?
10. What advice would you offer to someone in regards to consolidation, before making the move?

Appendix C

Interview questions of Fire Chiefs who's department has consolidation potential, but has not started the process

1. What are your feelings about fire department consolidations in general?
2. Have you ever considered consolidation as an option? Why or Why not?

3. What would be a driving factor for you to roll out a proposal and start the consolidation process in this community?
4. What roadblocks do you think would be encountered?
5. What do you think has to happen in order to get the idea of consolidation out on the table?
6. How do you think a consolidation would effect this community? Financially, emotionally?
7. Do you think the community would gain a better service with a consolidated department?
8. Reducing the duplication of efforts and services, uniformed training and greater purchasing power are some of the benefits I have learned about. What do you consider as a benefit and why?
9. What do you think would be the concerns of the firefighters in your department?
10. What effect do you think a consolidation would have on you? Your members? The elected officials?
11. Who do you think should be the one to get the ball rolling in this community?