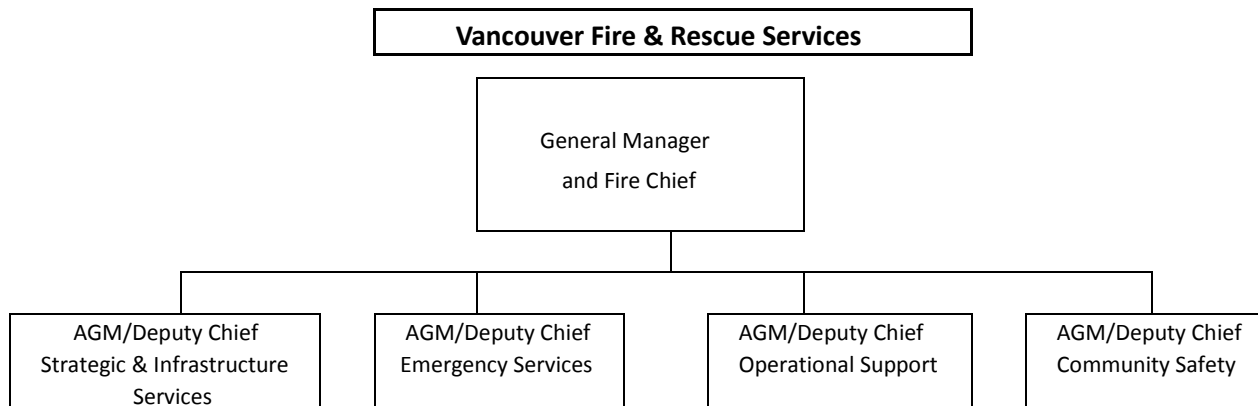


April 16, 2015

Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services Operational Audit

Background

VFRS is organized into four divisions: Strategic and Infrastructure Services, Emergency Services, Operational Support and Community Safety. Each division is headed by a Deputy Fire Chief.



Strategic and Infrastructure Services - This division includes: Fleet & Equipment Services; Occupational Health & Safety; Stores, Facilities Maintenance, Administration; and Corporate Shared Services personnel (Human Resources, Facilities, Finance, and Information Technology and General Administrative Services).

Emergency Services - This line operations' primary role is the provision of effective fire protection for life and property to the citizens of. Other services include: Emergency Medical Responses; Marine Fire Suppression; Technical Rescues, response to motor vehicle incidents; and Emergency Management and Hazardous Material Responses.

Operational Support - This division is responsible for training and professional development and runs the training centre. It also manages: Emergency Communications Systems; Emergency Medical Services (EMS); Maintains VFRS' Emergency Volunteer Corps (VVC); Neighbourhood Emergency Assistance Team (NEAT); and Heavy Urban Search and Rescue Response (HUSAR).

Community Safety - This division supports improvements in fire and life safety, and trends concerning fire cause and potentially dangerous situations. It conducts: Building and fire code enforcement, enhancements and evaluations; Building and fire prevention inspections and re-inspections as required; Public fire education; Fire investigations and develops professional standards; and various performance metrics monitoring to enhance VFRS' operations.

Leading Edge Innovation

In an effort to provide quicker response and reduce usage (wear and tear) on larger fire apparatus when responding to medical emergencies, VFRS utilizes small medical units that are positioned beside heavy ladders to respond to medical calls. Currently, VFRS operates eight "cross-staffed" medic units. This program has resulted in faster response times and has saved significant fuel costs and enabled the Department to extend the operating life of both heavy Engines and Ladders due to the reduced call volumes on these heavy units.

Community Safety Practitioners

Suppression firefighters, the largest division within VFRS are responsible to ensure for superior public safety in our community. To achieve this goal, suppression firefighters are trained and certified to perform medium-risk premise fire safety inspections, which has allowed the relatively small number of Fire Prevention Officers (FPOs) to focus on more complex buildings and premises. This initiative resulted in the increase in the number of fire inspections completed by the department.

Scope of the Audit

The objectives of this audit were to provide reasonable assurance to management in determining if VFRS:

- have effective firefighting, technical rescue, hazardous materials and marine response processes and systems in place to protect citizens and the city;
- manage assigned materials, equipment and resources economically, efficiently and effectively; and
- conduct appropriate and adequate training programs for firefighters to meet operational needs.

We also reviewed new procedures and compared VFRS' goals set in its 2011-2015 Strategic Plan to those achieved to date. The audit conclusion represents a summary of field visits, interviews, analysis of available data and documents, and review of business processes.

Conclusion

In our opinion, the VFRS has adequate business processes and systems in place to protect our citizens and the City. The current infrastructure and equipment replacement program will provide the needed fire hall upgrade to house the new apparatus and facilitate VFRS' training and service yard operations. The planned changes to the leadership structure will enhance supervision and accountability of the department and improve staff performance. The VFRS Advisory Board can enhance its oversight function by focusing on the department's mission and strategic direction. To continue the effort on its planned initiatives VFRS needs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness in asset management, training support and scheduling system, trip inspections, use of data analytics, and formalization of its succession plan.

The more significant findings and recommendations include:

- **Enhance VFRS' Advisory Board's Oversight Effectiveness:** VFRS' Advisory Board should focus on the department's mission and vision and consider bringing in members with risk and emergency management expertise.
 - *Effective immediately, the Department will report out any major concern to the City Risk Management Committee*
- **Redistribute Management Staff to better Support Field Operations:** VFRS should station exempt staff in fire halls to strengthen accountability and supervision, and to improve field and human resource administration.
 - *To ensure clarity of mission and commend the great work performed by our firefighters, the Department has begun the process of positioning one exempt Assistant Chief Officer on each of the four shifts. These four exempt Chief Officer positions will provide 24/7 oversight in our Operations division.*
- **Pre-trip Inspections Not Properly Done:** Pre-trip inspections by drivers should be properly completed to meet the BC Commercial Vehicle Safety & Enforcement Section of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure standards.
 - *As a result of this finding, the Department has initiated an audit of Driver Log books, developed a recertification program of drivers and directed that the Officer responsible for the apparatus must sign the Driver Log Book at the completion of each pre-trip inspection.*

Management has committed to address these and all the audit findings to improve its operation.