



Report to Public Safety and Regulatory Services Committee

To: Council Member Joe Biernat, Chair
Public Safety and Regulatory Services

From: Rocco Forté, Fire Chief

Date: March 19, 2002

Subject: Report to Reporting Committee on 2001 Overtime Budget and Strategies for Reducing Overtime.

Financial Impact

Within current department budget.

Dear Council Member Biernat:

We welcome the opportunity to share our accomplishments in reducing overtime expenditures over the past several years. The Minneapolis Fire Department has reduced overtime spending by 92% since 1998. We have moved from a department that relied on overtime in the past, to the "*Bell Curve*" staffing model, which has eliminated overtime as a tool to manage staffing.

Attached to this letter is census and budget data for fire departments across the country that are of similar size to Minneapolis. This is the group of cities that we exchange information on budget, staffing, response, emergency equipment and emergency response information with. As the data shows, our fire department compares very favorably with cities of similar size across the country in terms of overall budget, overtime budget, number of firefighters per citizen and cost per citizen.

Our current and future goal is to keep our overtime costs at 1% or less of our overall budget. We have set our goal at \$332,428 (.8% of the overall budget) for 2002. Going forward, we feel that we have achieved the appropriate budget number for overtime. It will not be possible to eliminate overtime entirely. Our intention is to continue to spend around 1% of our budget on overtime for the following reasons:

1. Hold-over costs associated with fires that occur near shift change at 8:00 a.m. are unavoidable.
2. Large-scale emergency events require additional staffing a few times per year.
3. Increased staffing, as a result of credible threats of terrorist attacks is a reality since September 11, 2001.
4. Our firefighters work a 54.6-hour average workweek. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) dictates that anyone working over 48 hours in a week be compensated for an additional 10 hours at one-half of their hourly rate. This is considered overtime pay, but is not something that can be managed by the Fire Department.

I believe that the Fire Department, through hard work and efficient management of our resources, has controlled 92 percent of our overtime budget. The remaining 8 percent is driven by federal mandate (Fair Labor Standards Act) and emergency incidents.

As part of benchmarking against cities of comparable size, we are always looking for efficiency and effectiveness ideas to bring back to Minneapolis. As part of the national accreditation process, we expect to learn more from other communities to make us even better in the future. Please contact me if you require additional information.

Respectfully,

Rocco Forté
Fire Chief