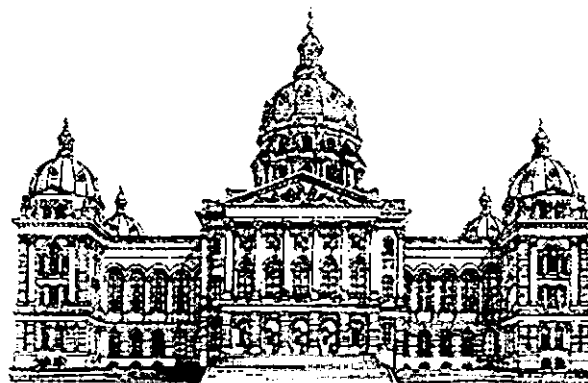


FINAL REPORT

**VOLUNTEER FIRE AND EMERGENCY
SERVICES STUDY COMMITTEE**



Presented to the
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
and the
IOWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
February 2000

Prepared by the
LEGISLATIVE SERVICE BUREAU



FINAL REPORT

Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Study Committee

February 2000

MEMBERS

Senator Jack Rife, Co-chairperson
Senator Tom Flynn
Senator Eugene Fraise
Senator Mary Lou Freeman
Senator Mike Sexton

Representative John Sunderbruch, Co-chairperson
Representative Russell Eddie
Representative Sandra Greiner
Representative Mark Kuhn
Representative Norman Mundie

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AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and charged to review and make recommendations regarding the legal, budget, governance, and financial aspects of volunteer fire protection services, emergency medical services, emergency warning systems, and other vital services provided under the auspices of townships. Related policy considerations involved with townships shall be addressed in order to improve the functioning of townships as viable units of local government or to integrate township responsibilities with those responsibilities of other units of local government.



I. Committee Proceedings.

The Committee was authorized two meeting days during the 1999 Interim.

Meeting Dates. The meetings during the 1999 Interim were held at the State Capitol Building on October 21, 1999, and December 20, 1999.

II. October 21, 1999, Meeting.

Overview. The first meeting of the Committee started with the election of Co-chairpersons Senator Jack Rife and Representative John Sunderbruch. The Committee heard presentations on township duties relating to fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS) and the cities' role in providing fire protection and EMS. The Committee also heard testimony from representatives of the Fire Service Institute at Iowa State University, the Iowa Firemen's Association, and the Iowa Fire Chiefs' Association.

Role of Townships. Norm Riggs, Field Specialist/ Community Development with the Polk County Extension Office, provided an overview of the history of townships in Iowa and their development as a unit of local government. Mr. Riggs noted that in 1975, townships assumed responsibility for rural fire protection. Prior to that time, there was no universal fire protection in Iowa, and only cities were required to provide fire protection. Providing emergency medical services is still optional for townships he said. Jaqueline Comito, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Iowa, and Mary Swalla Homes, Rural Action Coordinator for Iowa State University Extension, reviewed their research of fire protection provided by townships.

Fire Service Institute. George Oster, Program Manager of Research and Development for the Fire Service Institute at Iowa State University Extension, gave an in-depth overview of the demographic and statistical makeup of fire departments in Iowa, the kinds of services offered by the departments, the average condition of fire department equipment in Iowa, and Iowa fire department budgets relative to other states. Mr. Oster stated that three goals of policymakers regarding volunteer fire and emergency services should be to provide rational response levels and patterns, to provide viable governing and financial bases for response districts, and to provide state assistance that enables Iowa's emergency responders to develop adequate skills.

Iowa Firemen's Association. Jeff Gore and David Zimple, President and Past President, respectively, of the Iowa Firemen's Association, reviewed for the Committee issues relating to volunteer fire and emergency services from the perspective of the fire fighter. In regard to townships providing these services, townships should be required to impose a minimum property tax levy for fire services and the maximum levy should be increased above the current 60.75 cents per \$1,000. Also, townships should be required to be more accountable to the public regarding collection and disbursement of a fire levy.

Iowa Fire Chiefs' Association. Gerald Hoffman, President of the Iowa Fire Chiefs' Association, discussed training and safety issues. He said that training at the local departments is the best way to conduct training.

Cities' Viewpoint. Jeff Mark, City Administrator for the City of Altoona, stated that he works closely with the city's fire chief to address the increasing challenges of providing



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fire and emergency services. Mr. Mark recommended that townships be required to levy the actual amount needed to reimburse cities that are providing fire protection services to township residents if the city can adequately document the costs associated with providing the service and that townships be required to enter into contracts if receiving fire protection services from a city. He also recommended that townships be required to meet basically the same statutory budgeting requirements as cities.

III. December 20, 1999, Meeting.

Overview. The second meeting of the Committee continued with additional testimony relating to fire protection, including fire protection and EMS provided by cities, fire fighter and hazardous materials training, and safety issues.

The Committee also heard testimony on emergency medical services from the perspective of the Iowa Department of Public Health, EMS personnel, and a private citizen.

Sac City System. The Committee heard testimony from Gary Mahannah, City Administrator for Sac City, on the system and formulas the city has developed for providing fire protection services to the city and townships contracting by a 28E agreement with the city for fire protection services.

State Fire Marshal. Roy Marshall, the State Fire Marshal with the Department of Public Safety, gave the Committee a synopsis of how his office relates with volunteer fire and emergency services. The State Fire Marshal's Office works with fire and emergency services primarily in fire investigations, fire code enforcement, and training.

Volunteer Fire Fighter Training. Kay Oliver, Director of the Consortium of Iowa Community Colleges, explained that the Consortium was established two and one-half years ago to assist community colleges in providing education and training across the state. She described the approaches used by community colleges for fire fighter training. Doug Feil, Director of Kirkwood Community College's Environmental Health and Safety Programs, described the community college's programs. Mr. Feil stated that more volunteers would get additional training if the training is offered locally, is of high value and relevance, is of consistent content, if attending the training is a reasonable or low cost to the volunteer, and if there is an incentive to take the training.

Fire Fighter Safety. Labor Commissioner Byron Orton explained the extent to which volunteer fire fighters are covered under the Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Act and the extent to which his office interacts with volunteer fire departments.

Hazardous Materials. Captain Bradley Robinson, President of the Iowa Hazardous Materials Task Force, informed the Committee that the mission of the Task Force, formed in 1993, is to promote training, education, and a safer and more efficient emergency response system to hazardous materials incidents in Iowa by establishing a unified regional response system.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS). Gary Ireland, EMS Bureau Chief in the Department of Public Safety, gave a breakdown of emergency medical services providers around the state.

Medical Services Association. David Cole, the Legislative Chairperson for the Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association (IEMSA), described the state's EMS system.



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Personal Experience With EMS. June Golay, a resident of Saylor Township in Polk County, shared her experiences with emergency medical services response when her husband was involved in a fatal tractor accident.

IV. Committee Recommendations.

The Committee approved the following recommendations to the General Assembly at its December 20, 1999, meeting:

- A. That the General Assembly enact legislation that allows volunteer fire fighters and emergency medical services personnel to leave their place of employment, private or public, to respond to emergency calls.
- B. That the General Assembly attempt to standardize fire, EMS, hazardous materials, confined space rescue, and law enforcement response across the state by use of a statewide incident command management system.
- C. That the General Assembly amend the Iowa Code to provide for full disclosure by publication of receipt and expenditure of all funds under the authority of township trustees.
- D. That the General Assembly recognize that EMS and fire fighter basic training is in the interest of public safety and that state funding for training be considered by the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee that considers funding for the Department of Public Safety.

V. Documents Filed With the Legislative Service Bureau.

A. October 21, 1999, Meeting.

- 1. Committee Rules of Procedure.
- 2. "Township Government in Iowa: A Brief Discussion of Its History and Current Status," Norm Riggs, Community Development Specialist, Iowa State University Extension, October 21, 1999.
- 3. Recommendations Presented to the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Committee, submitted by George Oster, Fire Service Institute, Iowa State University Extension to Communities, October 21, 1999.
- 4. Testimony on behalf of the Iowa League of Cities to the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Study Committee, submitted by Jeffery Mark, City Administrator, Altoona, Iowa, October 21, 1999.
- 5. Recommendations to the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Study Committee, submitted by Dave Zimple and Jeff Gore, Past President and President, Iowa Firemen's Association, October 20, 1999.
- 6. "The Role of Townships in Iowa's Fire and Emergency Medical Services," by Jacqueline M. Comito and Mary Swalla Holmes, Institute of Public Affairs,



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University of Iowa and Fire Service Institute, Iowa State University Extension to Communities, 1998.

7. "Shaping the Future of Iowa's Fire and Emergency Services" by George Oster, Fire Service Institute, Iowa State University Extension to Communities, October 21, 1999.
8. "1996-97 Iowa Township Fire/EMS Services," table compiled by Jacqueline Comito and Jon Wolseth, and study developed by Fire Service Institute, Iowa State University Extension to Communities, Institute of Public Affairs, July, 1998.
9. "Iowa's Career and Combination Emergency Service Departments," by Jacqueline M. Comito, Iowa State University Fire Extension Service Institute, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, December, 1997.

B. December 20, 1999, Meeting.

1. Testimony on behalf of the Iowa League of Cities to the Volunteer Fire and Emergency Services Study Committee, submitted by Gary C. Mahannah, City Administrator, City of Sac City, Iowa, December 20, 1999.
2. Testimony submitted by Roy Marshall, State Fire Marshal, Iowa Department of Public Safety, December 20, 1999.
3. Testimony on behalf of the Consortium of Iowa Community Colleges, Kay Oliver, Director, December 20, 1999.
4. Testimony on behalf of Kirkwood Community College, Doug Feil, Director, Environmental Health and Safety Programs, December 20, 1999.
5. Testimony submitted by Byron Orton, Iowa Labor Commissioner, Iowa Department of Workforce Development, December 20, 1999.
6. "1997 Labor Laws of Iowa," submitted by Byron Orton on behalf of the Iowa Division of Labor, Iowa Department of Workforce Development, December 20, 1999.
7. Testimony on behalf of the Iowa Hazardous Materials Task Force, submitted by Captain Bradley Robinson, Sioux City Fire Department.
8. Testimony and Accompanying Documents on behalf of the Iowa Department of Public Health, submitted by Gary Ireland, EMS Bureau Chief, December 20, 1999.
9. Testimony on behalf of the Iowa Emergency Medical Services Association, submitted by David Cole, Legislative Chairperson, December 20, 1999.



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10. Testimony and E-911 Tape Recording submitted by June Golay, Saylorville Township, December 20, 1999.

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