INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 2011, Town Board of the Town of Seneca, New York with the support of the Boards of Fire Commissioners of the Hall, Stanley and Seneca Castle Fire Districts located in Ontario County, New York contracted with Michael P. Dallessandro to conduct an independent review of the general day-to-day operations and management of the three individual Fire Districts and the general level of fire protection they provide to the Town of Seneca. This review is a critical "first step" in a pro-active process of seeking feedback, conducting a self-assessment, evaluating each district's current situation, recognizing the positives, identifying issues that may require attention, identifying alternatives and, if necessary making changes to bring about possible improvements in service.

This report is not a comprehensive, detailed analysis or "audit" of the existing fire and emergency services in the community or for that matter a "multi-year" in-depth study. The report is only intended to provide a general snap shot or "where are we at" overview of the districts and make independent recommendations on topics such as management practices/structure, buildings and facilities, fleet/apparatus and other general topics. Throughout the process this review was guided by some general basic questions that the consultant used to generate discussions and that were used to identify data that was requested for review. These questions are as follows:

1) Are we as a Town and fire service organizations, in our current form, meeting the needs and expectations of the community and our volunteer fire department members?
2) Do our levels of service model applicable "best practices and recommended standards for similar organizations and communities in our state?
3) Are emergency services provided by our organizations, provided to the community at an appropriate cost?
4) Are the districts and organizations well managed?
5) Is there adequate planning for the future?
6) Are there any changes that should be considered to improve the districts or the current structure of fire service organizations serving the Town of Seneca?

Along with the questions listed above that were used as a guide for the review three additional guide criteria were used as well to help direct the consultant's external "look" at the participating Fire Districts and they are as follows:

MISSION

All emergency services organizations regardless of size and only restrained by budget or manpower should strive to provide the highest possible level of service to the public.

VALUES

All emergency services organizations should insure they strive to model the following values:

1) People are our most valuable resource.
2) As an organization we are committed to being responsive to emerging needs of the community.
3) Fire protection is our critical mission.
4) We will seek opportunities to provide shared services and develop partnerships, which will strengthen our ability to deliver services to our citizens.
5) Excellence in the delivery of customer service is the standard of our performance.

VISION

All emergency services organizations should be properly funded, staffed and equipped organizations of highly motivated and trained people providing a full range of emergency services, public fire protection and fire safety education. Our organizations should be seen as a premier fire department in the delivery of fire suppression, rescue, prevention, training, EMS (if provided) and dispatch/communications (if provided).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Board of Fire Commissioners/Officers/Members – Hall Fire District

Board of Fire Commissioners/Officers/Members – Seneca Castle Fire District

Board of Fire Commissioners/Officers/Members – Stanley Fire District

Town of Seneca Supervisor John Sheppard

Town of Seneca Town Board

Michael P. Dallessandro would like to personally acknowledge and thank the aforementioned groups, organizations and individuals for their assistance in providing time and data for this review.

The Organization & Purpose of a Fire Department

Fire services are provided to the Town of Seneca by three fire companies. Historically, these companies have served the Town with the first fire company located in the hamlet of Stanley, which was established in 1910 followed by the Hall Fire Company, established in 1914. Finally, the Seneca Castle Fire Company was established in 1949. The fire service in our society has long been considered an integral and well-regarded element of our nation's critical infrastructure. Some form of fire department has been part of our society for well over 350 years. Many of our greatest tragedies have revolved around the devastations caused by uncontrolled fire within our nation's cities and towns. I believe that it is essential for all of us who participate in the delivery of fire and emergency services to remember that people within every community stand exposed to a wide range of risks. It is our job to ensure that they remain as safe as possible. The citizens living in the Town of Seneca and the coverage areas of the **Hall, Seneca Castle & Stanley Fire Districts** should expect no less and provide no less to their friends and neighbors.

People who do not even know the individual members of the fire department look to them as their guardians against the sudden and unexpected

emergencies that occur from time to time. Fire departments need to look at the citizens they protect as the customers for whom their specialized services are tailored. Local fire agencies must consider the fulfillment of their customers' expectations as their major reason for existence. All too often, the customers who provide the fiscal support for their community form no part of the community fire protection equation. This is a sad fact of fire protection in the 21st century. The concept of citizens voluntarily stepping forward to protect the safety of their fellow citizens is a concept that predates the birth of our nation. Unfortunately, the manner in which society has evolved over the past several decades has created a culture of citizens who are unfamiliar with the historic volunteer tradition. It is for this reason that the services provided by the dedicated volunteers of the Stanley, Hall and Seneca Castle Fire Volunteer Fire Department/Company or Association must be nurtured and preserved. I will comment further on volunteer recruitment and retention at various points in this document.

What is a fire department? The question sounds basic and simple however it is important that all who read this report understand this basic concept. "Simply stated, (it) is a group of fire officers, firefighters and emergency responders working together to achieve a common objective" (Barr & Eversole, 2003, p. 864). Protecting citizens in a community is the primary objective toward which a fire department should strive. The **Seneca Castle, Stanley & Hall Fire Districts and Departments** have accepted both the legal and moral responsibility for fire protection services within the boundaries of the Town and your various districts. Your organizations have been on guard since they were founded. Your fire departments were born of

noble origins and appear to be continuing those traditions in the 21st century. Today your Districts and Associations protect a total area of 50.4 square miles (130.6 km²), all of it land. The south town line is the border of Yates County, New York. The town is located in the Finger Lakes region and is northwest of Seneca Lake.

Conjoined U.S. Highway 20 and New York State Route 5 pass across the town. New York State Route 14A is a north-south highway in the town. New York State Route 245 is an east-west highway in the town. NY-14A and NY245 are briefly conjoined near the east town line.

Volunteer members should always consider that regardless of the fact that your service is of a voluntary nature; your organization has nonetheless accepted both the legal and moral responsibility to provide fire protection services within the **Seneca** community. You now have a duty to provide an acceptable level of fire protection services that are commensurate with the appropriate codes, standards and accepted professional best practices in the field of fire protection. You are obligated to perform to the best of your ability, within fiscal constraints imposed upon you by the local authority having jurisdiction and your organizational fund raising efforts. It is a common thought of fire protection experts from around the country that fire departments will find this more difficult to accomplish in the years ahead. The current state of the economy in the United States is creating fresh roadblocks to the delivery of effective emergency services. Unfortunately, for the Fire Departments and Districts serving the Town of Seneca this consultant did observe that limited financial resources have prevented the organizations from making needed repairs and maintenance or

improvements to facilities, presents challenges in keeping apparatus fleets up to date and in some ways have made the purchases of even some of the basic firefighting equipment and turn out gear difficult. On the plus side the current climate in New York State combined with the current fire service structure in the Town of Seneca does present a viable option to preserve the identity of each individual organization and Hamlet based fire services while at the same time providing the opportunity for greater financial and purchasing options as possibly a joint fire district or single town wide fire district as one option I will discuss later in this report.

Let me also say that it was my privilege to be allowed to study the operations of your fire departments and districts. It was also my privilege to enjoy meeting your officers and members and to enjoy the shared bonds of friendship and camaraderie that exists within your three departments. By meeting with the officers and various stakeholders through interviews and my visits, I am now better prepared to render opinions that are based upon not only the best practices of the business of fire protection but also the actual, identified people who will be making the decisions for the future. Let me now talk a bit about what a modern fire department should be and the services it should provide.

"A fire department shall have programs, procedures and organizations for preventing the outbreak of fires in the community and for minimizing the danger to persons and damage to property caused by fires that do occur. The fire department also shall carry out other compatible emergency services as mandated" (NFPA 1201, p. 1201-5).

Society has long recognized the need to provide for the suppression of fire. Over time, the public has come to expect this service be provided by some level of government. In order for us to better understand what a fire department is, and what it should be doing, we must turn to the nationally recognized codes and standards that provide guidance for our efforts. These speak to the types of services a modern fire department should provide. According to the **National Fire Protection Association**, a fire department should provide such services as:

1) Fire Suppression Services: The classic fire department task of responding to and extinguishing fires.
2) Fire Prevention and Inspection Programs: The best way to correct fire safety mistakes that might lead to fire is to engineer them out of a building before it is built and inspect buildings to ensure that they are maintained in a fire-safe manner.
3) Public Fire Safety Education: Programs must be delivered to the various user populations in a community that will equip these people with the essential life-safety skills to avoid exposure to a fire, improve their chance of escaping from a fire or minimize the consequences of their exposure to fire.
4) Emergency Medical Services: Over the past 2 decades, fire departments all over the country have come to be recognized as the service best positioned to provide emergency medical services to their communities. An adequate capability must be maintained to allow for instantaneous delivery of his critical service 24-hours per day.
5) General Emergency Response Capability: A capability must be provided to assist a community during times of natural disaster, or

imminent emergency. The fire department has historically been a pillar of support in this important area.

6) Community Consultation: Fire departments should provide a means of consulting with local people and groups who have fire-related problems, questions and requirements. People look to the fire service to answer their questions and allay their fears.

Not all of these operations areas are your fire department's area of responsibility, however most are. Adequate provisions should be made by your local government to ensure the best possible protection for the community. A central focus should be established for operational guidance. In order to assist the fire department in the direction of its efforts it is important that the department develop a Mission Statement that explains the reasons for its existence. That agency must then work to build an organizational structure to fulfill all of the operational needs necessary for meeting the community's fire protection needs. Refer to page #2 of this document to develop a mission statement or to insure your current mission statement fits the spirit of the aforementioned mission, values and vision for fire departments. Once a fire department understands the actual reason for its existence it can then lay out solid, goal orientated plans for future success.

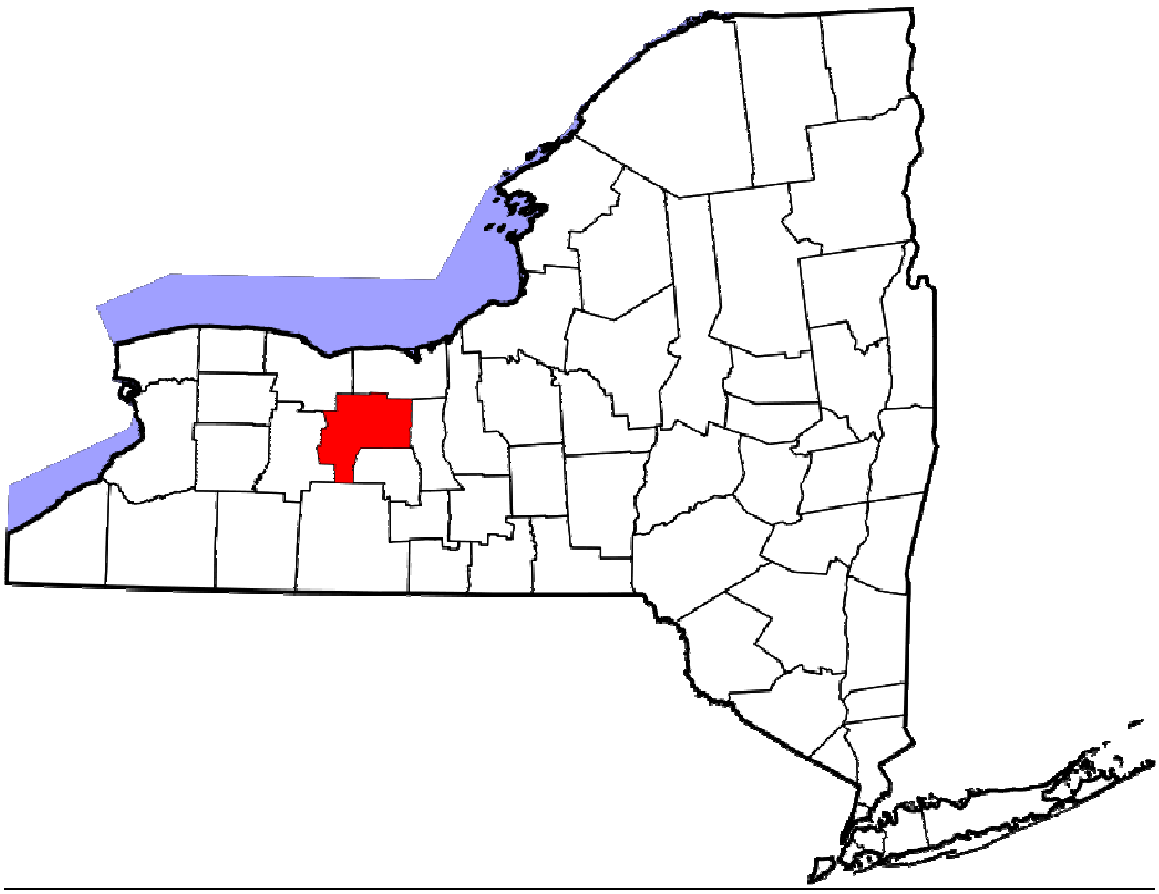
Every community or organization has a small number of naysayers. Gone are the days when the firehouse should simply be a garage where the trucks are stored and gone are the days that the trucks and equipment are viewed as "just another tool in the barn" in case you need it like a farm implement. Education based on facts must be used to garner support for quality fire protection services. The key to success in this area is to maintain

communication between members of your fire departments and remind you that the first step to gathering community respect or support for the Fire Department is to have respect and support for the members and the organizations internally.

Community & Fire Risk

While this review did not include a detailed fire risk analysis, a general review of the community (first due area) served by the fire departments did take place. The Hall, Stanley & Seneca Castle Fire Districts/Departments and Volunteer Fire Associations provide fire suppression, rescue services primarily for the Town of Seneca. **Seneca** is a town in Ontario County, New York, United States. United States. The population was 2,731 at the 2000 census. The town is named after a group of local natives. The **Town of Seneca** is on the south border of the county and is southwest of the City of Geneva. The Town of West Seneca in Erie County added "west" to its name to avoid confusion with the Town of Seneca.

Ontario County, NY:



The region was the locale of the Seneca tribe, a member of the Iroquois, and the sites of many important villages are in the town or the surrounding area. The area was part of the Phelps and Gorham Purchase. Settlement commenced around 1790, the year after the county was formed. A "District of Seneca" was created judicially in 1789 at the time the county was established, but its extent and subdivisions are not clearly known. The town was finally organized in 1793. In 1872, the northeast part of the town was

used to form the Town of Geneva, taking with it most of the historic Seneca communities and sites.

When counties were established in New York State in 1683, the present Ontario County was part of Albany County. This was an enormous county, including the northern part of New York State as well as all of the present State of Vermont and, in theory, extending westward to the Pacific Ocean. This county was reduced in size on July 3, 1766 by the creation of Cumberland County, and further on March 16, 1770 by the creation of Gloucester County, both containing territory now in Vermont. On March 12, 1772, what was left of Albany County was split into three parts, one remaining under the name Albany County. One of the other pieces, Tryon County, contained the western portion (and thus, since no western boundary was specified, theoretically still extended west to the Pacific). The eastern boundary of Tryon County was approximately five miles west of the present city of Schenectady, and the county included the western part of the Adirondack Mountains and the area west of the West Branch of the Delaware River. The area then designated as Tryon County now includes 37 counties of New York State. The county was named for William Tryon, colonial governor of New York.

In the years prior to 1776, most of the Loyalists in Tryon County fled to Canada. In 1784, following the peace treaty that ended the American Revolutionary War, the name of Tryon County was changed to honor the general, Richard Montgomery, who had captured several places in Canada and died attempting to capture the city of Quebec, replacing the name of the hated British governor. Seth Reed, a Colonel in the Battle of Bunker Hill moved here with his family as a Pioneer between 1787 and 1795. See also

Geneva (town), New York. In 1789, Ontario County was split off from Montgomery. The actual area split off from Montgomery County was much larger than the present county, also including the present Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, Steuben, Wyoming, and Yates Counties, and part of Schuyler and Wayne Counties. In 1796, Ontario County was reduced in size by the splitting off of Steuben County. In 1802, Ontario County was reduced in size by the splitting off of Genesee County. The actual area split off from Ontario County was much larger than the present county, also including the present Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara, Orleans and Wyoming Counties and parts of Livingston and Monroe Counties. In 1821, portions of Genesee County were combined with portions of Ontario County to create Livingston and Monroe Counties. In 1823, a portion of Seneca County was combined with a portion of Ontario County to create Wayne County. The same year, a portion of Steuben County was combined with a portion of Ontario County to create Yates County.

Ontario County is in western New York State, east of Buffalo, southeast of Rochester, and northwest of Ithaca. The county is within the Finger Lakes Region of the state. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the county has a total area of 662 square miles (1,716 km²), of which 644 square miles (1,669 km²) is land and 18 square miles (47 km²) (2.72%) is water.

As of the census of 2000, there were 100,224 people, 38,370 households, and 26,360 families residing in the county. The population density was 156 people per square mile (60/km²). There were 42,647 housing units at an average density of 66 per square mile (26/km²). The racial makeup of the county was 95.04% White, 2.06% African American, 0.22% Native

American, 0.69% Asian, 0.02% Pacific Islander, 0.70% from other races, and 1.26% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 2.14% of the population. 17.9% were of German, 14.9% Irish, 14.8% English, 13.8% Italian, 7.3% American and 5.1% Dutch ancestry according to Census 2000. 95.6% spoke English and 2.3% Spanish as their first language. There were 38,370 households out of which 32.80% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 55.00% were married couples living together, 9.90% had a female householder with no husband present, and 31.30% were non-families. 24.70% of all households were made up of individuals and 10.10% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.53 and the average family size was 3.03. In the county the population was spread out with 25.40% under the age of 18, 8.30% from 18 to 24, 28.40% from 25 to 44, 24.80% from 45 to 64, and 13.20% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 38 years. For every 100 females there were 95.60 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 92.70 males. The median income for a household in the county was $44,579, and the median income for a family was $52,698. Males had a median income of $36,732 versus $26,139 for females. The per capita income for the county was $21,533. About 4.90% of families and 7.30% of the population were below the poverty line, including 9.10% of those under age 18 and 6.40% of those age 65 or over.

As of the census[1] of 2000, there were 2,731 people, 967 households, and 781 families residing in the Town of Seneca. The population density was 54.1 people per square mile (20.9/km²). There were 1,032 housing units at an average density of 20.5 per square mile (7.9/km²). The racial makeup of the town was 97.84% White, 0.48% African American, 0.15% Native

American, 0.26% Asian, 0.48% from other races, and 0.81% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 1.50% of the population.

There were 967 households out of which 37.3% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 67.7% were married couples living together, 8.9% had a female householder with no husband present, and 19.2% were non-families. 15.4% of all households were made up of individuals and 6.2% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.81 and the average family size was 3.10. In the town the population was spread out with 27.3% under the age of 18, 6.0% from 18 to 24, 27.6% from 25 to 44, 26.5% from 45 to 64, and 12.6% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 39 years. For every 100 females there were 101.5 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 100.5 males. The median income for a household in the town was $48,007, and the median income for a family was $51,705. Males had a median income of $31,301 versus $27,146 for females. The per capita income for the town was $19,165. About 2.0% of families and 3.5% of the population were below the poverty line, including 2.2% of those under age 18 and 8.3% of those age 65 or over.

*See the following chart for technical Seneca data.

Seneca, New York

— **Town** —



Seneca, New York

Location within the state of New York

Coordinates: 42°50′13″N 77°4′32″W42.83694°N 77.07556°WCoordinates: 42°50′13″N 77°4′32″W42.83694°N 77.07556°W

Country	United States
State	New York
County	Ontario
Government	
- Type	Town Council
- Town Supervisor	John T. Sheppard (R)
- Town Council	Members' List[show]
Area	
- Total	50.4 sq mi (130.6 km^2)
- Land	50.4 sq mi (130.6 km^2)
- Water	0.0 sq mi (0.0 km^2)
Elevation	866 ft (264 m)
Population (2000)	
- Total	2,731
- Density	54.1/sq mi (20.9/km^2)
Time zone	Eastern (EST) (UTC-5)
- Summer (DST)	EDT (UTC-4)
FIPS code	36-66289

GNIS feature ID 0979480

Fire Districts

As referenced previously in this narrative fire and rescue services for the Town of Seneca are provided by three separate fire districts; Hall Fire District, Seneca Castle Fire District and Stanley Fire District. Emergency Medical Services also known as E.M.S. is provided to the town by two organizations. One E.M.S. organization is a paid/commercial service and the other is a volunteer service serving areas in the Town of Seneca and Gorham. The volunteer fire services are provided by members of the various departments who operate from three separate stations. The districts/departments provide protection to residents, businesses and an educational organization located in the community. The district, department/association is also responsible for protecting some properties and/or facilities of community concern some of which are listed in the following chart:

PROPERTIES OF COMMUNITY CONCERN
Landfill Project
BOCES Educational Facility
Significant Agricultural Facilities
Town owned Local Government Facilities & Infrastructure
Revenue Generating Facilities such as Seedway, John Deere Dealer, Etc

The following series of photos are an example of the various properties in the first due response/protection area of the three Fire Districts:



Retail & Small Business Centers



Various Business/Commercial Structures

Public Assembly



Numerous, Aging, Houses of Worship Type Structures



Educational Facilities



Traditional Housing Stock



Landfill (Visible in Distance)



Numerous Agricultural/Farming Facilities





Businesses That Present Firefighting Challenges





Various Facilities That May Pose Haz-Mat or Other Concerns





Areas That Pose Unique Situations to Responding Firefighters

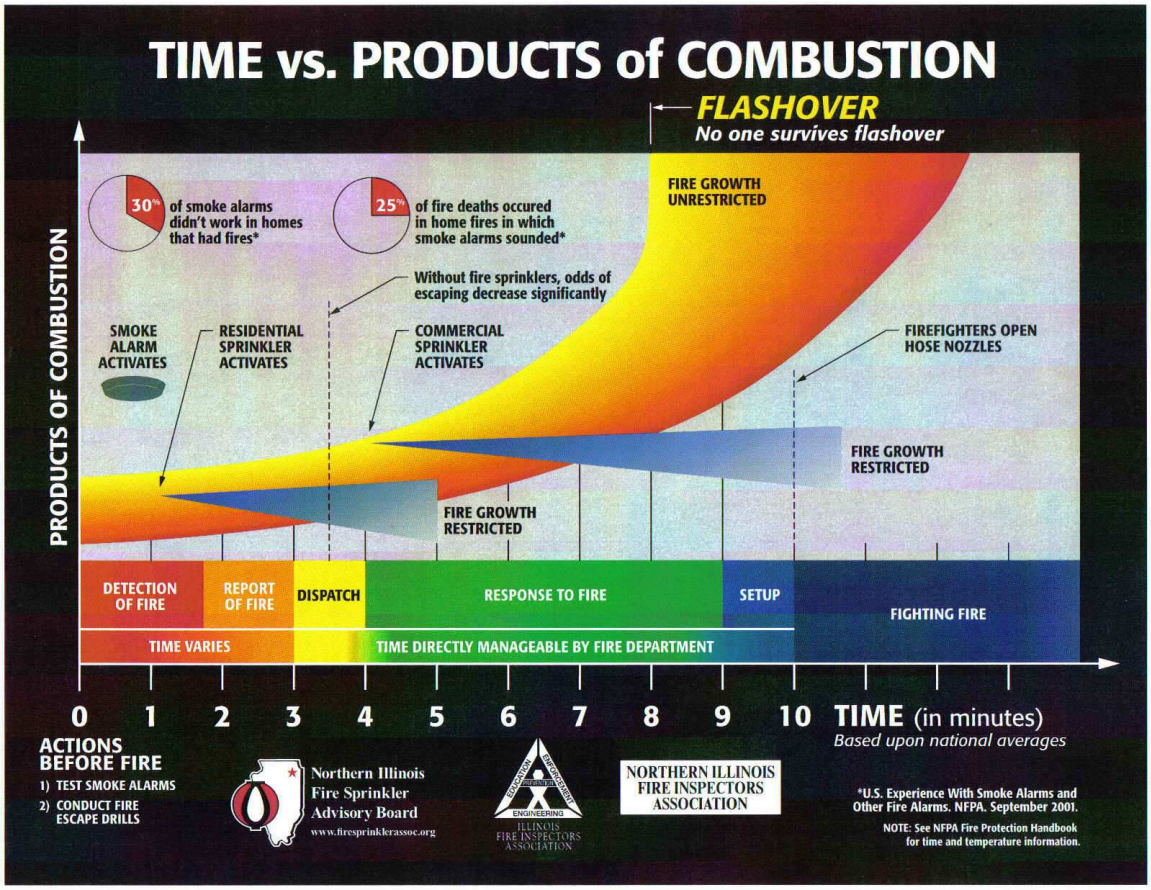


During my years as both a firefighter and a consultant I have learned that there are three limiting factors in the ability of any community to meet required fire suppression activities and water flow to properly protect life and property and have a positive outcome of fire related incidents.

1) The number and size of fire department pumper apparatus
2) The firefighters available to provide the attack force
3) The available fire water flow from the community water system

Properly staffed, trained and equipped fire companies must arrive, deploy and attack fires within a specific time if successful fire ground strategies and tactical objectives are to be met. The same holds true for rescue operations, major medical emergencies and other situations that require varying levels

of resources. Every minute the fire keeps burning the more damage results and the likelihood of any victims surviving decreases. The following graphic on the next page shows the timeline of a fire inside a structure as it develops from the ignition stage and progresses through the growth stage. When the fire reaches the flashover stage all combustible materials in the space are heated to their ignition temperatures and simultaneously ignite in a violent and sometimes explosive event. Flashover is deadly to both firefighters and any victims that may yet still be inside the building.



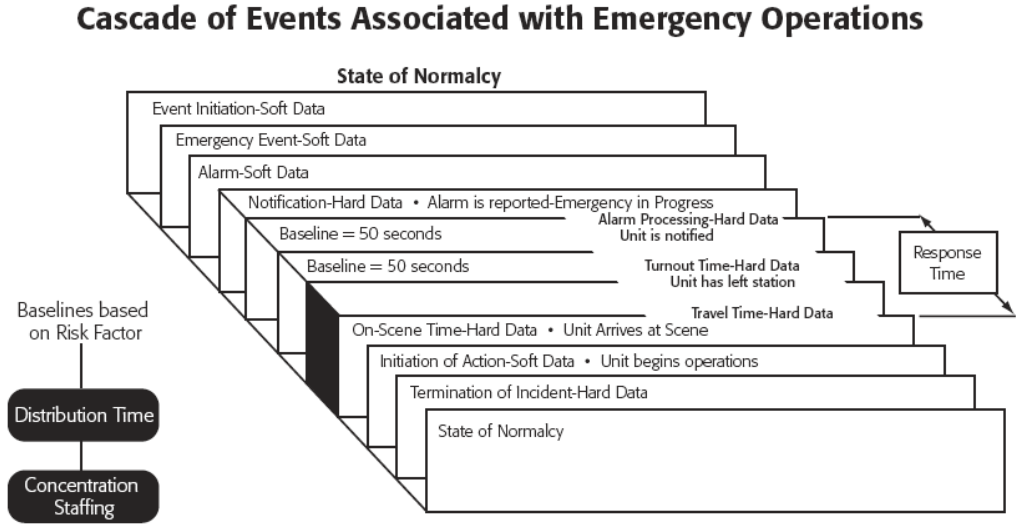
Event Cascade

For all emergency incidents there are factors that affect successful outcomes: Station location; number of available and responding units; and the response

of the required staffing to mitigate the emergency incident. The success of each factor is based upon the reaction to and timing of each of the following cascade of events.

1. Event initiation
2. Emergency event
3. Alarm
4. Notification
5. Alarm processing/unit is notified
6. Turnout time/unit leaves station
7. Travel time
8. On-scene time/unit arrives
9. Initiation of action
10. Termination of incident

Figure 1 Cascade of events



As can be seen in the chart on the previous page, there are several uncontrollable factors in responding to emergency incidents. These factors provide soft data that is not measurable.

- There is no measurement of the time from when an incident actually starts to when it is discovered.
    - This fact hold true even when there are automatic detection devices and automatic extinguishing systems.
- There is no way to accurately determine the time between discovery of the event and notification of the emergency communications system, although that time seems to multiply in the minds of the average person discovering and reporting an emergency incident.

Call processing times, dispatch, turnout time and response time and arrival times can all be readily measured.

The prevention and suppression of fires is the primary mission as well as the underlying reason for the existence of the Hall, Seneca Castle & Stanley Fire Districts, Departments and Associations. Aggressive firefighting actions are needed to minimize fire damage, rescue any trapped occupants, contain fire to the area or building of origin and must begin prior to flashover occurring to be effective. After flashover has occurred, the fire becomes more difficult to control and extinguish the damage more severe, and the likelihood of any victims surviving drastically decreases. The conditions that firefighters are required to work in are also significantly more difficult and dangerous after flashover has occurred.

To make an aggressive interior attack for reported structure fires in their respective coverage areas under each district's current separate and individual operating structure, the three Districts, Departments and

Associations should each send the following firefighters needed to complete the following tasks in order to make a safe interior fire attack:

Recommended First Due Response	
Command	1 Firefighter
Attack Hose Line	2 Firefighters
Pump Operator	1 Firefighter
Water Supply	1 Firefighter
Search and/or Ventilation Team	2-4 Firefighters
Rapid Intervention Team	3 Firefighters
Safety Officer	1 Firefighter
Back up Hose Line	2 Firefighters
Aerial Operator (Mutual Aide if Needed)	1 Firefighter
Total	**14/16 Firefighters**

The above chart is a recommended first due response based on generally accepted standards for safe fire department operations and every effort should be made to model that recommendation within the constraints of available manpower.

For the primary response area covered by the three Districts and Departments the NFPA 1720 standard applies the following:

NFPA 1720 Response Goals			
Demand Zone	**Demographics**	**Staff/Resp Time**	**Achievement %**
Special Risks	AHJ Determines	AHJ Determines	90
Urban	>1000 People/Mile	15/9 Minutes	90
Suburban	500-1000 People/Mile	10/10 Minutes	80
Rural	<500 People/Mile	6/14 Minutes	80
Remote	Travel distance >/= 8 Miles	4 Responders	90
*Remote: Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, the fire department should be able to safely commence an initial attack within two minutes			

Based on the population density for the Town of Seneca area the "Rural" standard in NFPA 1720 is being applied in this review. This standard as referenced in the chart above requires 6 firefighters (two in two out/Officer/Driver-Pump Operator) to arrive in 14 minutes. Today's modern standards of response guidelines and benchmarks are also defined by the Center for Public Safety Excellence and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, encourages multiple levels of service within the

following categories, combined with appropriate deployment of equipment and personnel. As agencies analyze their response times, those times should include call processing, turnout time, and travel time.

Rural: Population of less than 10,000 people and/or any area with a population density of less than 1,000 people per square mile. (Much of the Town of Seneca coverage area is in this category)

Bench mark:

First unit 10 minutes,

Second unit 14 minutes,

Balance of 1st alarm assignment 14 minutes

Performance 90%

Base line – 70%

First unit 13 minutes

Second unit 18 minutes/20 seconds,

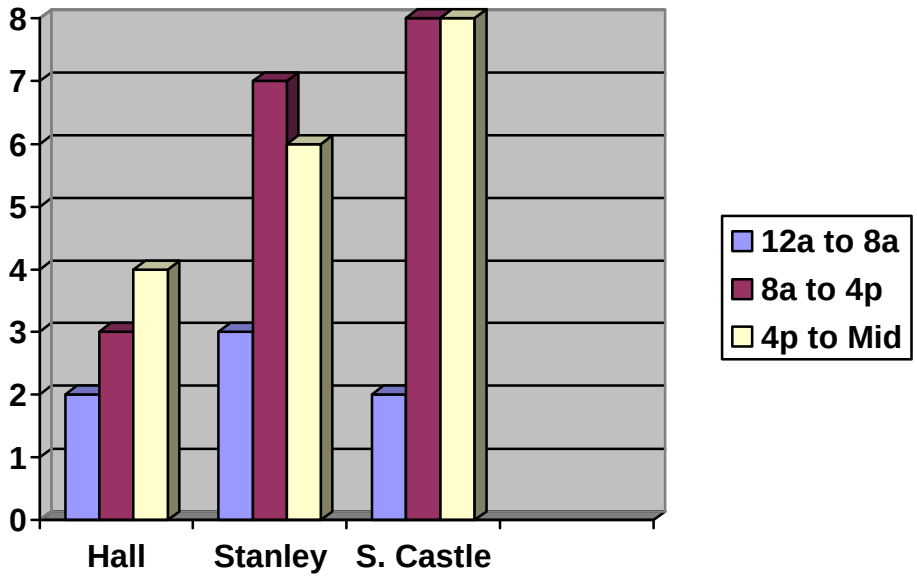
Balance of 1st alarm assignment 18 minutes/20 seconds

Performance 90%

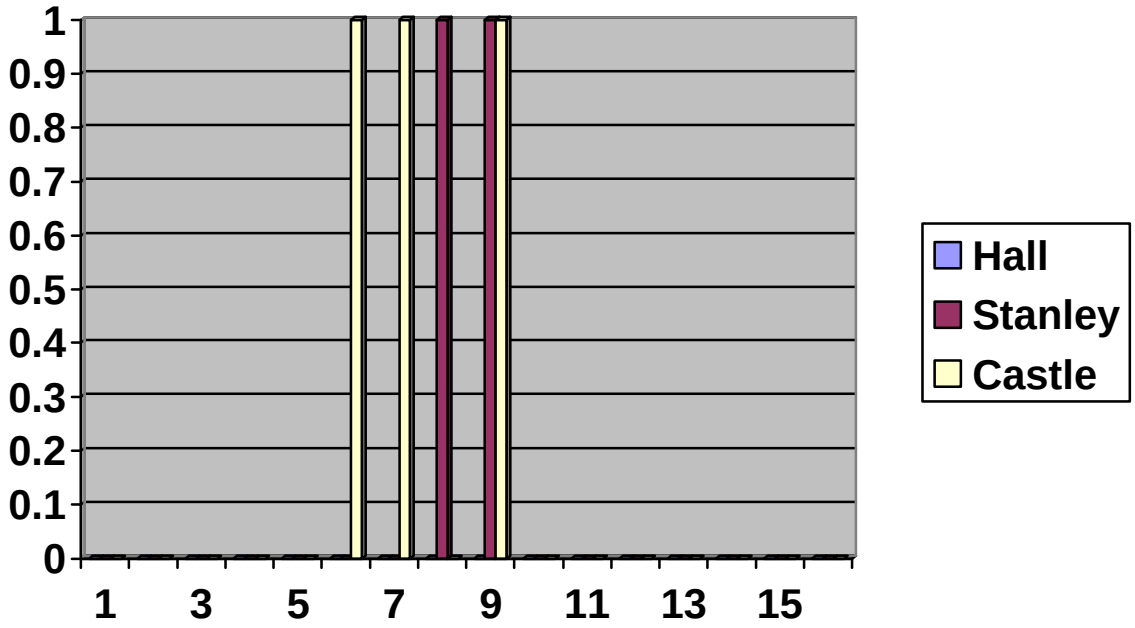
The criteria above show the range of performance within the Rural category from the target benchmark to a lesser base line of 70% of the benchmark. These performance indicators are based upon emergency, priority 1 responses.

For the purposes of this general review I requested and reviewed call response data provided by the Each Fire District for the period 1/1/2011 to 3/31/2011. My goal was to provide a general sense of response times and available manpower during a random "snap shot" so that the Commissioners and Officers of the three Fire Districts/Departments can use this data to get a general feel for the response trends of their members, have this added information available as they review and plan for future recruitment needs, also be able to use this data as a part of a larger goal to uncover any possible motivational concerns regarding members participation and review response needs during certain time periods during the day or night. For the purposes of this review only calls where complete data was available were used so as to not "skew" the report. This is critical due to situations where calls were cancelled or initial apparatus or officers were called off could provide an inaccurate picture of the actual full start to finish response. Along that same theme, responses where additional information received during the response would be used to alter the response such as slowing units down while enroute were not used either as that can paint an inaccurate picture as well. Lastly, mutual aide responses were not used either as the travel time to stations or addresses outside of the districts can often make responses appear abnormally long when only analyzing numbers. The following charts contain the various information "snap shot" breakdowns:

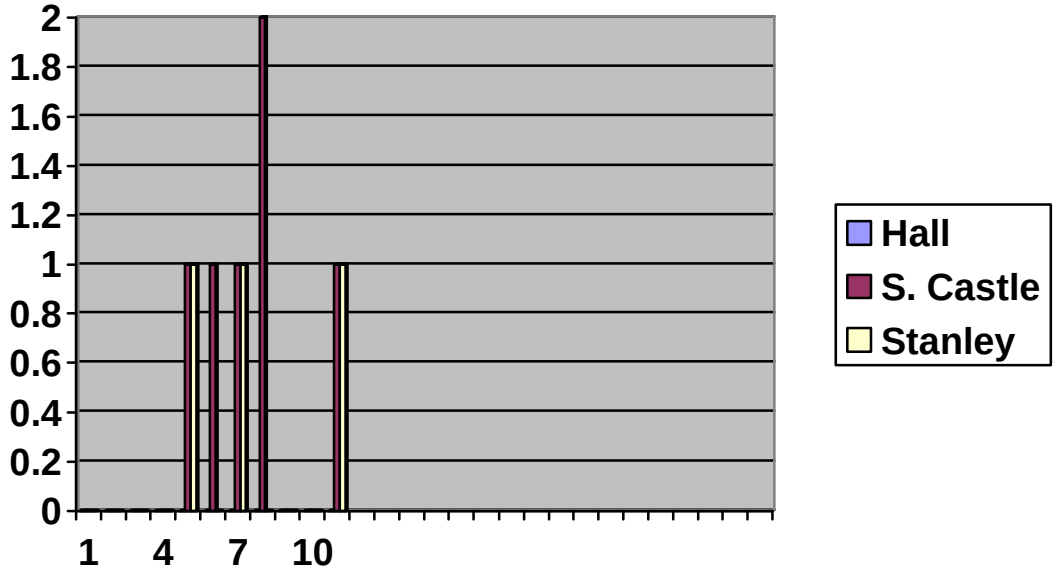
RESPONSES BY TIME OF DAY



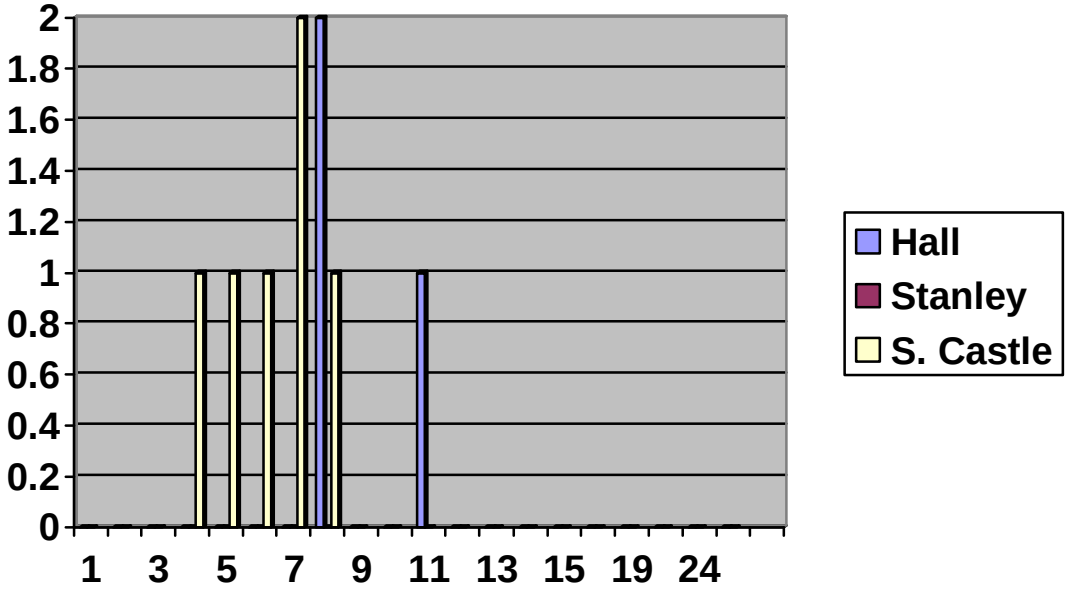
RESPONSE TIMES – FIRE



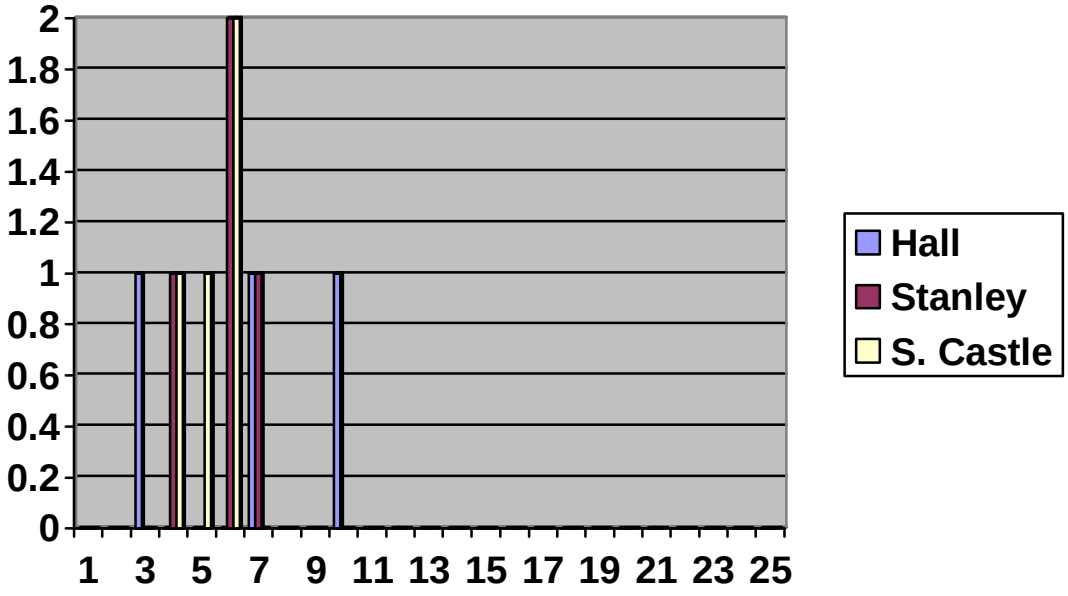
MANPOWER – FIRE



MANPOWER – MVA



MANPOWER – SERVICE CALL



Trends that were noted above are as follows:

1) Town of Seneca calls for service during the sample period followed national patterns where the majority of calls occur between 8:00am to 4:00pm and 4:00pm and Midnight.

2) Of the responses to incidents categorized as "fire" during the sample period the fire departments in the Town of Seneca had response times 100% of the time within nationally accepted standards for similar departments (14 minutes or less for rural fire departments per NFPA 1720). *Hall FD logged no incidents classified as "fire" during the sample test period of this report.

3) Total responding personnel for the majority of "fire" incidents reviewed during the test period met the "rural" response goal based on Seneca's population density per square mile for turning out 6 or greater responders

with only 2 responses falling under 6 total members/personnel responding (in both of those incidents 5 firefighters responded). *This report did not break down responders/personnel into interior qualified and not interior qualified for this general reporting.

4) During this review this consultant did a line by line review of dispatch information of all of the calls answered during the study sample period. While the calls may have been labeled fire, EMS support, MVA, rescue or other headings the dispatch log information showed many of these calls ultimately fell into a category that for this review was designated as "service calls". The ability to designate these calls as "service calls' uses the extraordinary powers of "Monday Morning Quarterbacking" meaning at the time of the call the caller or the dispatcher may have felt they warranted an emergency response or a response by the fire department but in the "light of day" said calls may have been a matter that could have been handled by the police, plumber, electrician, building superintendent/maintenance worker, counselor, DPW or other person or agency other than the fire department. The point of this commentary is to prompt a conversation internally at the fire department level that can be continued with dispatchers, the town and other Seneca area emergency response and non emergency response agencies to make every effort to develop a plan that reduces the drain on emergency services and volunteer service providers. Also dialogue may need to be held to study the impact of these service type responses on total call numbers and said impact on required response percentages or "stats" for volunteers in a way that reduces burn out. While some would argue that a call is a call for the sake of conversation and to look ahead we must at least acknowledge the fact that despite the fact that sometimes the volunteer fire

service does not turn out fully interior qualified firefighters for every response many of the actual incidents can be handled by volunteers with years of experience handling the "service" related calls of their fellow neighbors and community members.

Hall, Seneca Castle & Stanley Fire District's and Fire Department's Level of Compliance with NFPA 1720

As a part of this review I provided each department's Chief with a copy of the NFPA 1720 questionnaire. This survey was intended to help your Commissioners and Officers take a look at each organization's level of compliance with professional standards that were designed to guide organizations and operations within the American Fire Service as we know it. In my opinion, although firefighters and some politicians will quickly point out that these are only recommendations, the standards published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) are the nations "best practices" guidelines that all fire departments and officers/firefighters should strive to follow and model. All volunteer or predominantly volunteer fire departments should work within their organizations to become compliant with or model NFPA standard 1720, which deals with the organization and deployment issues within volunteer fire departments. Fire departments who reach a point where they are in total compliance with the 1720 standard are making considerable progress towards meeting the NFPA 1500 standard on occupational safety and health and the NFPA 1561 standard on emergency services incident management if they have not also met those standards in

entirety as well. This basic review does not explore compliance with either of the aforementioned 1500 or 1561 standards. In order for the Commissioners and Officers to get a feel for a department's level of compliance and to introduce them to this standard and to provide a goal for compliance whenever possible, I have developed a simple questionnaire that is voluntarily completed by the Chief(s). During this particular review the survey questions are listed below. Each Chief was asked to complete a survey which reflects their professional opinion, interpretation and perspective of the wording of the questionnaire and the application of NFPA 1720 in their organization. It is my hope that this exercise has allowed each department to conduct their own self assessment of their level of NFPA 1720 compliance and that they will use the information going forward to strengthen their organizations. I have NOT noted each of the three chief's individual responses in this document however I have marked in red "common areas" that individual fire departments should pay extra attention to insure their operations are efficient and most importantly safe for their members and the community at large. (Note individual Chief's response documents are included for review in the binder under each FDs tab)

Fire Suppression Organization:

1) Are fire suppression operations organized in such a way as to ensure the fire department's fire suppression capability includes sufficient personnel, equipment, and other resources to efficiently, effectively and safely deploy fire suppression resources?

*Consultant's Comment: Officers acknowledge sufficient resources in equipment and tools but also acknowledge the one main weakness of the volunteer fire service is that we often rely on "chance" that the right number of people show up with appropriate

skills and/or the need for mutual aide to insure we have sufficient manpower. Active, ongoing recruitment of volunteers is the new "norm" going forward for Fire Districts in the Town of Seneca and many around our state and country.

2) Are there written organizational, operational and deployment procedures as specified in written administrative regulations, standard operating procedures and departmental orders?

3) Does the fire department participate in a process that develops a community risk management plan with respect to the risks associated with the storage, use and transportation of hazardous materials?

*Consultant's comment: Each fire department should stay in communication with the various community representatives such as building department/code enforcement officers, fire marshal's office and even representatives of the state police and state D.O.T. to regularly evaluate the fire department's knowledge of and exposure to hazardous materials that exist within the community or that may travel through the community. A review of hazardous material reporting forms should also be conducted annually.

4) Are the specific roles of the fire department and other responding agencies defined by the community risk management plan for hazardous materials and other special operations?

5) Do the fire department procedures clearly state the succession of command responsibility?

6) Are the personnel who respond to fires and other emergencies organized into company units or response teams with appropriate apparatus and equipment?

It is this consultant's opinion that based on the response patterns of a volunteer fire department the crew serving as the "first due" company with defined "first due" tasks and additional crews arriving on other apparatus, despite arriving at the station and boarding apparatus randomly, can fulfill the spirit and goal of this standard with appropriate guidance and on scene company style organization by the individual serving as the "officers" on each of the additional arriving apparatus.

7) Has the fire department identified minimum staffing requirements to ensure that a sufficient number of members are available to operate safely and effectively?

*Consultants comment: The districts should make every effort to regularly evaluate staffing. Also, due to different availability of manpower based on different times of the day and the added time needed to assemble mutual aide crews coupled with the travel time needed for assistance from the "neighbors" to arrive, additional aide should be considered for incidents that meet a criteria predetermined by your district to reduce the time spent waiting for sufficient manpower to conduct safe and effective operations.

8) Does the fire department maintain a standard report containing specified information for each response?

9) Do these reports include the location and nature of the fire or emergency and describe the operations performed?

10) Does this report identify the members responding to the incident?

11) Are there standard response assignments and procedures, including mutual aide response and mutual aide agreements, predetermined by the location and nature of the reported incident that regulate the dispatch of companies, response groups and command officers to fires and other emergency incidents?

12) Have the number and type of units assigned to respond to a reported incident been determined by either risk analysis and/or pre-fire planning?

Fire Suppression Operations

13) Do your procedures assign one individual as the incident commander?

14) Do your procedures require assumption and identification of command to be communicated to all units responding to or involved at the incident scene?

15) Do your procedures require that the incident commander shall be responsible for the overall coordination and direction of all activities for the duration of the incident?

16) Do your procedures require the incident commander to ensure that a personnel accountability system is immediately utilized to rapidly account for all personnel at the incident scene?

17) Do your procedures require the company officer/crew leader be aware of the identity, location and activity of each member assigned to the company at all times?

18) Do your procedures require each member of the company to be aware of the identity of the company officer/crew leader?

19) Do your procedures require the orders addressed to individual members, particularly verbal orders and orders at incident scenes to be transmitted through company officers?

Initial Attack:

20) Upon assembling the necessary resources at the emergency scene, does your fire department have the capability to safely initiate an initial attack within 2 minutes 90% of the time?

*Consultant's Comment: Chiefs in response to this question acknowledged the unpredictability of arriving manpower to impact this goal however the wording of this question clearly states "upon assembling the necessary resources" (meaning once rigs and personnel are on scene) can initial attack be made within 2 minutes and it is my belief that Seneca area fire districts may actually be able to do this.

21) Initial attack operations shall be organized to ensure at least four members shall be assembled before initiating interior fire suppression operations at a working structure fire?

*Consultant's comment: There is significant risk for injury and death to firefighters who attempt to "make the grab" flying solo or while working in less than 2 in 2 out operational models and there is significant exposure to liability to responding officers who are in charge of a scene should something go bad when firefighters are working in less than ideal manpower situations so every effort should be made to place manpower on scene at working structure fires very early in the incident including achieving this goal by using automatic mutual aide.

22) Do your procedures require that while they are operating in the hazardous area, two individuals shall work as a team?

23) Do your procedures require that outside the hazardous area, two individuals shall be present for assistance or rescue of the team operating in the hazardous area?

24) Do your procedures require that the assignments of any individuals not be permitted if abandoning their critical task(s) to perform rescue clearly jeopardizes the safety and health of any firefighters operating at the incident?

25) Do your procedures require the initial attack operations be organized to ensure that if, upon arrival at the emergency scene, initial attack personnel find an imminent life threatening situation where immediate action could prevent loss of life or serious injury, such action shall be permitted with fewer than four personnel when conducted in accordance with NFPA 1500, standard for fire department occupational safety and health program?

26) Does your fire department have the capability for sustained operations including fire suppression; engagement in search and rescue, forcible entry, ventilation and preservation of property; accountability for personnel; a dedicated rapid intervention team; and provision of support activities for those situations that are beyond the capability of the initial attack?

Chiefs commented that the departments are dependent on volunteer response and mutual aide companies.
*Consultant comment: If the Fire Districts/Departments are not able to recruit additional active, interior qualified volunteer manpower over the next 24 to 36 months capable of meeting the goal and spirit of the above sustained operations section (at all

times of the day or night) the districts should begin to have additional dialogue or coordinate the further study of a long range merger of the three organizations that would then have greater financial resources to eventually add part-time career staff and increased volunteer ranks through multiple volunteer "companies" covered under a larger town-wide district or department umbrella.

Intercommunity Organization:

27) Are your mutual aide, automatic aide, and fire protection agreements in writing?

28) Do said agreements address such issues as liability for injuries and deaths, disability retirements, cost of service, authorization to respond, staffing and equipment including the resources to be made available and the designation of the incident commander?

29) Do your procedures require the training of personnel for all fire departments in those procedures that govern your mutual aide, automatic aide and fire protection agreement?

30) Are these plans comprehensive and do they produce an effective fire force and ensure uniform operations?

31) Are those companies who respond to mutual aide incidents equipped with communications equipment that allows personnel to communicate with the incident commander and division officers, group officers or sector officers?

Emergency Medical Services:

32) Does your department respond to and/or provide E.M.S.?

33) If YES, are your emergency medical services (EMS) operations organized in such a way as to insure that your fire department's emergency medical capability includes personnel, equipment and resources to deploy the initial arriving company and additional alarm assignments?

34) Do your procedures include established automatic mutual aide or mutual aide agreements?

35) The fire department shall clearly document its role, responsibilities, functions and objectives for the delivery of EMS?

36) Are you meeting your response requirements in a timely fashion?

37) Do you have any no-response EMS situations where neighboring agencies have to be toned out to cover the call?

Quality Management for EMS:

38) Does your FD have a quality management program?

39) Are you reviewing all first responder and BLS medical care provided by the department?

40) If YES to question #39, are you documenting this review process?

Special Operations Response:

41) Have you established any special operations components within your fire department?

42) Have you organized your special operations in such as manner as to ensure that the fire department's special operations capability includes sufficient personnel, operational procedures, equipment and apparatus and resources to efficiently, effectively and safely deploy the initial arriving company and additional alarm assignments providing services?

43) Have you established automatic mutual aide or mutual aide agreements to assist you in complying with your operational requirements of your special operations services?

44) Have you adopted a special operations response plan and SOPs that specify the role and responsibilities of the fire departments and the authorized functions of members responding to hazardous materials emergency incidents?

45) Have all fire department members who are expected to respond to emergency incidents beyond the first responder operations level for hazardous materials response been trained to the applicable requirements of NFPA 472, Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Haz Mat incidents?

46) Does your fire department have the capacity to implement a RIT during all special operations incidents that would subject firefighters to immediate danger of injury or in the event of equipment failure or other sudden events?

47) Have you determined where you will obtain assistance if a higher level of emergency response is needed beyond the capability of the fire department special operations?

48) Do your procedures consider the availability of outside resources that deploy these capabilities and the procedures for initiating their response?

49) Do your procedures limit the operations of your personnel to performing only those specific special operations functions for which they have been trained and properly equipped?

Fire Department Systems:

50) Does your department have a firefighter occupational safety and health program that forms the basic structure for protecting the health and safety of firefighters, regardless of the scale of the department or the emergency?

51) Does your fire department have an incident management system that meets the requirements of law?

52) Does this system comply with the NFPA 1561 standard on emergency services incident management system to form the basic structure of all emergency operations of the fire department regardless of the scale of the departments or the emergency as specified by law?

53) Do you utilize the incident management system to manage incidents of different types including structure fires, wild land fires, haz-mat, EMS and other types of emergencies that could be handled by the department?

54) Does your fire department have a training program and policy that ensures that personnel are trained and competency is maintained effectively, efficiently and safely execute all responsibilities consistent with the departments organization and deployment

*Consultant's comment: Fire Departments should make sure they develop a drill schedule and/or training calendar that is posted and available to members. Officers should keep tabs on members

training status every few months and reach out to members who may be in danger of not making the department's required training goals for members. Creative training schedules may need to be developed to address volunteer members schedules due to family and job commitments and the demand on volunteer's time by sources outside the VFD.

55) Does your department have a reliable communications system to facilitate prompt delivery of public fire suppression, EMS and special operations?

56) Does the communications system including its facilities equipment staffing and operating procedures comply with NFPA 1221 standard for the installation, maintenance and use of emergency services communications systems?

57) Does your department have SOPs for radio communications that provide for the use of standard protocols and terminology at all types of incidents?

58) Does your department have a system of standard terminology to transmit information, including strategic modes of operations, situation reports, and emergency notifications of imminent hazards?

Pre-Planning:

59) Does your department have operational procedures, policies and requirements that allow it to conduct pre incident planning?

60) Does your department pay particular attention to target hazard occupancies?

*Consultants Comment: Regular tours and preplanning sessions for commercial facilities in your response areas should be a priority for each department serving the Town of Seneca. Business owners expressed their desire for this during community stakeholder interviews. This will also insure responding members and officers have an up to date understanding of the facilities that can improve operations and reduce the danger to firefighters due to lack of knowledge of the layout and hazards of commercial facilities.

Regarding pre-planning and target hazard occupancies listed above there needs to be a relationship between the types of occupancies to be protected and the amount of apparatus and staffing resources that are required for each different occupancy style. The NFPA has already done this for us. I have taken the following information from the NFPA Fire Protection Handbook 20th edition and it should be considered as you pre-plan your district, train your members and mutual aide companies, develop automatic aide plans and agreements and consider future apparatus purchases:

High Hazard Occupancies (schools, hospitals, nursing homes, explosive plants, refineries, high rise buildings and other high life hazard or large fire potential occupancies)

At Least:

Four pumpers

Two ladder trucks (or combination apparatus with equivalent capabilities)

Two chief officers and other specialized apparatus as may be needed to cope with the combustible involved.

No fewer than 24 firefighters. One or more safety officers and a RIT for a total of 29 personnel.

Medium Hazard Occupancies (apartments, offices, mercantile and industrial occupancies not normally requiring extensive rescue or firefighting forces)

At Least:

Three pumpers

One ladder truck or equivalent listed above

One chief officer and specialized apparatus as needed listed above

Not fewer than 16 firefighters – One or more safety officers and RIT for a total of 21 personnel.

Low Hazard Occupancies (one, two or three family dwellings and scattered small businesses and industrial occupancies)

At Least:

Two pumpers

One ladder truck or equivalent listed above

One chief officer and other specialized units as referenced above

Not fewer than 12 firefighters – One or more safety officers and RIT or a total of 17 personnel.

Rural Operations (scattered dwellings, small businesses and farm buildings).

At Least:

One pumper with large water tank (min 500 gal)

One mobile water supply apparatus (1000 gal or larger)

Such specialized equipment as may be needed to perform effective initial interior firefighting operations.

One chief officer

Not fewer than 12 firefighters and one or more safety officers and a RIT for a total of 17 personnel.

Additional alarms:

At least the equivalent of that required for rural operations for second alarms; equipment as may be needed according to the type of emergency and capability of the fire department. This may involve the immediate use of mutual aide companies until local forces can be supplemented with additional off duty personnel. In some communities, single units are "special called" when needed without always resorting to a multiple alarm. Additional units may be needed to fill at least some empty stations.

*Consultant note: During my visit(s) to the Town of Seneca I found that the majority of the properties and facilities in their coverage area were of the Rural hazard occupancy class (scattered dwellings, small businesses and farm buildings) with only a very small portion of what could be termed in other categories ranging from low to high hazard category properties (i.e the landfill operation, BOCES, etc). Based on the charts for those said categories and the apparatus currently operated by the various Fire Districts I believe they are able to properly meet first due needs based on equipment. However due to potential "time of day" issues regarding personnel and equipment in Seneca and at mutual aide departments (and in the majority of all volunteer units) I do have concerns about being able to consistently bring out the maximum 29 first due firefighters and equipment needed to safely and effectively operate at a fire in a high hazard occupancy such as a working fire incident or other major disaster at the BOCES facility or other significant incident as defined in the previous charts. Based on the above information officers should not delay the activation of mutual aide until they arrive on location and do a complete "size up" as this may result in too much time elapsing for a mutual aide response to be effective in life saving

activities or controlling an advancing fire in a high hazard occupancy before it becomes a total property loss and a basic extinguishment of the remains of the "former" structure.

1720 Compliance summary

This survey was intended to be an educational exercise. Reading the responses and in speaking with the Chiefs and officers one can clearly see there is a great deal of "interpretation" regarding compliance with NFPA 1720. YES was the response to many of the questions above from officers in all three departments. Please note the consultant's comments and consider them in the coming months. While there are some members in every organization that continue to "buck" organization, standards and requirements or members who prefer the "good ole days" leaders must remember that an organized, well trained, responsive fire department should be the minimum standard provided to your community. Also it should be noted that pre-planning is a critical function of any fire department. Pre-plans should be a goal for each fire departments leadership. While this may appear to be a project that is very large for any one individual to wrap their hands around, a pre-plan committee should be formed and a listing of facilities that require pre-plans be developed. Then a manageable calendar or time table should be established based on a schedule that allows the committee to develop a number of pre-plans every three months or so until the task is ultimately completed. *The Fire Districts serving the Town of Seneca should adopt NFPA 1720 standard as an operational model and goal for all officers to push the organizations towards for full compliance. A copy of the standard has been included on your flash drive as a PDF document.

Fire Department Key Assignments and Strategies for Success

The means of achieving success in the fire service are no different than in most areas of human organizational behavior. First, what is an organization? An organization is a group of people working together to achieve a common set of goals. In order for any form of success, an organization must have a number of components in its organizational tool box:

1) Structure
2) Processes
3) A behavioral system for its members.

A basic definition of structure states that it is a pattern of ways which members, sometimes too numerous to always have face to face contact and engaged in a wide range of tasks relate to one another in a conscious, systematic manner for the accomplishment of mutually acceptable goals. The following helps to make up structure for an organization:

1) Job definitions – What the member is supposed to do.
2) Departmentalization – The grouping of like tasks/functions.
3) Span of Control – How many people report to an officer?
4) Delegation – Moving authority as close to the source of the decisions as possible.

A fire department is a top down organization. Orders and directives are issued at the top and travel downward through an established chain of command. In order to have a better idea of how to operate, members of the fire department need to know where the decisions are made and who will

make them. Members need to know whether there is a centralized or decentralized type of an organization. Here are some clues:

1) Do individuals have a great deal of input into decisions?
2) Are individuals allowed to perform many tasks or are they limited in what they are allowed to do on behalf of the organization.
3) Are the tasks laid out in a specific or general way, in terms of how they are to be performed?
4) Is the department broken down by function or are people expected to know how to perform the full range of jobs?
5) What is the span of control?
6) Are tasks delegated by the leadership to the members for their performance?

It is important to note that people will catch on very quickly to the type of organization to which they belong. Let me offer you this warning at this point. Highly centralized organizations, where power and control lie in the hands of a few will stifle individual initiative and limit individual freedom. Decentralized organizations where people are trained and empowered to do their tasks, will allow individuals to grow and encourage development. Volunteer fire departments and their leaders have to walk a careful balance between structure and delegation/empowerment. While a fire department and fire district must be top down and have clear chain of command members should have input, involvement and a way to bring concerns to the attention of leaders and have these ideas, at the very least taken under consideration. Members also must understand that simply because their

ideas or suggestions have been made final decision authority may still be in the hands of the members, community, officers or board based on the particular situation.

Stakeholder Interviews

During the course of this review the consultant conducted stakeholder interviews with a random group of individuals. These interviews were conducted in private over a multi-day period and the participants were assured reasonable confidentiality and only their comments in general would be reflected in this report and not the names of the individuals who made them. The following represents the questions that were asked of all interviewees and the corresponding responses received:

Town of Seneca Fire District Stakeholder Interviews:

1) How long have you been involved in the fire service?
   - 15 years
   - 50 years
   - 25 years
   - 50 years
   - 2.5 years
   - 8 years
   - 12 years in fire service
   - 25 years
   - 25 years
   - 6 years
   - 34 years
   - 27 years
   - 23 years
   - 5 years
   - 34 years

*Consultant's comment: The various fire districts and the Town Supervisor should be commended for engaging a wide range of stakeholders to participate in this process. Clearly from the range of experiences listed

above in years the districts and community are seeking input in a fair and equitable way.

2) What do you see as the strengths or positive of the fire service in the town of Seneca?

Laid back but energized
Good solid firefighters
Great community support, response time/effectiveness very good
Hamlet based service provide good response
Localized service near local businesses
Doing pretty good with little manpower
All who volunteer become a family
Generations of firefighters
Everybody knows each other – got your back!
Mutual aide system is great – saves the system during daytime
Dedicated individuals
People here work with their hands/bring those skills to FD
Slower call volume than the burbs
Well equipped
All 3 departments are similar rural organizations
Work well together when we have to

3) What do you see as any issues or internal problems in the fire service in the town of Seneca?

None
Must train more together
All 3 organizations have their own issues
Chiefs need people skills not just firematic knowledge
Social members drain members who might otherwise be active
Active firefighters must support FD fundraisers more
Need members!
Need improved Town water supply
Same as all FDs
Members with strong personalities must use those strong personalities in a positive way for the FDs
Poor communication skills from officers or commissioners can drive members away
Constant “nay sayers” bring everybody down

*Consultant's comment: As communities deal with a declining number of volunteers officers and leaders must realize that they may have to interact and deal with members in a different way than is the past. The "get it done" attitude and true grit of firefighting men of yesterday may not always be the leadership style that retains and motivates today's volunteers. Everybody including those who live in quiet rural communities is dealing with increased levels of stress from job, family and economic/financial issues so quality leaders of volunteer organizations must learn not to allow their management style to become another form of stress members are dealing with or they may re-think their membership.

4) What are your thoughts pro/con are about this study?

Good idea x 5
Disagree – 12 minutes from Castle to Hall on a good day
Con – can't see this ever working, personality clashes, fish fighting in the pond
Geography can't be changed
Taxpayers are currently getting good bang for their buck but it is Ok to look at things impartially
Room for improvement
Worthwhile idea for future consideration
50/50
No good
Will lose volunteers if merging is pushed
100% pro

*Consultants comment: Overall most parties interviewed are willing to listen to input but are strong in their "local" beliefs.

5) Do you feel that the Town of Seneca is properly protected from the perils of fire?

Yes x 10
Good code enforcement
Need more public education
Water system improvements are a good thing
Yes but a full time day driver might help response
The houses are still standing aren't they?
Adequate based on funding and manpower
As good as any other similar rural community

Consultant's Comment: For the most part firefighters in the Town of Seneca feel they are able to handle the current call volume and types of incidents they are faced with.

6) Do you feel you have the tools/equipment/vehicles needed to provide proper fire protection to the community?

Yes x 7
Need fleet replacement schedule
Love newer trucks but we are OK
Could switch to just 2 modern well equipped rigs for our FD
Need more hand tools and extrication equipment town wide
No real off road capabilities

*Consultant's comment: While members acknowledged that improvements or the latest piece of gear would be nice this consultant clearly had the feeling that firefighters were humble and appreciative for what they currently have and understand how hard people their community work for a dollar.

7) What regional issues do you see impacting the fire service in the Town?

Lack of FD funding
Training mandates, bail out mandate $$$
Landfill revenue, how long will it last?
Small population doesn't yield many volunteers
Young people may not stay here
Hamlet loyalty still governs many things
Will remain a sleepy agricultural community
Radio and frequency costs due to county
Ontario county fire academy hurts training due to commute

8) Do you feel the community and local government support the fire service in the Town?

Community yes, Gov't so/so
Yes x 15
Wish there was better turnout for commissioner meetings and fund raisers – take more interest in FDs please!

9) What role does EMS play in providing emergency services in the Town?

Leave EMS to EMS providers
Would consider BLS first response for FDs but no more

Too much training demand for EMS certifications
FDs do not have enough day members to handle EMS as well
Large fire district could employ part-time EMTs during the day
FDs can offer support to EMS with an occasional driver, etc.
FD members will burn out if they start doing EMS
I have no interest in EMS
Not enough manpower
Double edge sword – keep members busier and interested with increased call volume but eventually burn them out.

10) Where do you see your FD in 5-10 years?

In a new building
More new members
New truck
3 core FD units will still be here
Not much change
Just like today
Consolidated – improved turnout gear, common vehicle spec
Growth will not come to Seneca
Same organizations with a few new members
1 day at a time
Not sure
I will be a retired member x 3

11) If the concept of merging or consolidating FDs were to start to advance what would your thoughts be n that subject?

Not in favor of it
What would the organization look like?
How would seniority be figured?
What would happen to the officers?
Should be fair and equitable and represent whole town
Won't work, should not pass fire to get truck
Response times will grow
Bigger Gov't dissolves little towns
Could cost the life of a child
Your local FD is something you might never use but is important to have
One station cannot cover the whole town
Cannot happen due to geography
Another station is needed in Sutton Road area of town

Pride is in Hamlets, members may not get out of bed for flooding basement at 3am to go across town
District can merge but should retain individual companies

12) In your opinion are there FDs that would come together more willingly or some that might resist?
Consultant's comment: This question was intended to probe deeper the relationship between the 3 districts and departments however it seemed that most individuals simply looked at this question from a geographical standpoint vs. both components geography and internal relations. Majority of stakeholders proposed Hall and Stanley merging.

13) The Hall Fire District is proposing a new facility. What would your comments be on that topic?

I am for the project - they need a station!
Propose a smaller facility – 1 less bay, smaller community room
Very necessary due to modern truck sizes and safety
Should not have to follow prevailing wage on construction – there are talented people in this town who need work
Need to move ahead, no parking
Should have done it 15 years ago
Go for it!
They need it x 9
Community room may not generate $$ but they still need a place to meet and fund raise and shelter in weather emergencies.
Dire need
20 years too late

*Consultant's comment: There is strong support for this project among all fire service stakeholders interviewed from all three departments.

14) What is the biggest risk facing your community?

Lack of members x 15
Two large fertilizer companies
Not much draw for young families to locate in Seneca
Landfill closing – no revenue

15) If you were king for one day and could change anything involving the Fire service in the Town of Seneca what would it be?

New class A, enclosed cab pumpers
New building x 5
We have what we need
1 day off with no pager and a chicken BBQ
Quad/gator for off road response abilities
Recruit back members who quit or were thrown out due to "personality" issues
Create top notch training program here in Seneca
Replace old tools and turnout gear
I would give a responsible gift
A new home for Stanley FD
Commercial turnout gear washers
More air bags

16) Last comments:

Saving taxpayer dollars is a good idea but FD consolidation is not the answer – we are not wasting or abusing taxpayer dollars
Classes are needed for officers on how to communicate and interact with people

*A random sampling of community members were also interviewed by this consultant for the development of this report. Community members were interviewed to evaluate their level of understanding of the current fire department structures and what the perceptions of the community members are regarding the current and future plans of the organizations and the fire service in general in the Town of Seneca. The comments are unedited and are as follows:

1) Members are right in town and often work near stations as well
2) Firefighters have good knowledge of our businesses and facilities
3) Is three fire departments a good use of tax dollars?
4) The fire departments are a bit of a boys club – where is the line between small town and professional entity?
5) The fire departments have the normal internal issues
6) Fire departments should change operational models to emergency services as fires are rare in today's better educated society
7) Should connect more with local businesses – tours, preplans, etc
8) Firefighters are dedicated, serious, committed
9) There are questions as to how the three departments get along?

10) There are some questions about Stanley's need for very new equipment?
11) Hall FD has the greatest need for equipment
12) There is one "alpha dog" in Stanley "his fire department"
13) Response time is important to community. How would a regional fire department impact response times?
14) How would a regional FD impact community spirit ie; chicken BBQ days? We have no VFW or Legion hall – the FDs are it!
15) They (the FDs) are fiscally responsible
16) It is tough to get volunteers
17) Should regionalism be county driven or town driven?
18) The perception is that the fire departments are nearby however during the day when firefighters are at work this might not be the reality.
19) Provide the community more details on what things cost.
20) Provide more education for community possibly via annual newsletter or websites.
21) Provide list of officers and members to community – meet your neighborhood firefighters type format.
22) The organizations are secretive

Consultant's Comments: The above comments should be reviewed and taken at face value. They represent the statements and opinions of only a small handful of random members of the community. This consultant believes that the community supports local firefighters however we can never assume this will always be the case. Read the above comments and understand their impact on how your organizations move forward.

Fire Apparatus – Vehicle Review

During my onsite visits to your three fire districts I spent some time reviewing your fire apparatus and vehicle fleet. In the fire service you can always find differing opinions regarding the type and configuration or favorite make/model of apparatus that a department should operate however for this report most of my general review considers the following points only:

a) Do you have reasonably appropriate apparatus/vehicles to mount a proper first due response in your district's coverage area?

b) What is the general condition and serviceability of your vehicles?

c) What is the general replacement schedule for a fleet like yours?

d) What specialized apparatus/vehicles do I as a consultant feel could enhance your ability to offer services to your community or make your member's jobs easier?

Based on the information I have gathered along with a series of photographs, it is quite clear that the three Fire Districts have taken steps to update and operate a more modern, safe and dependable fleet of vehicles only restricted by the financial constraints of each district. It is my opinion that each district can mount a first due fire attack in most one or two family dwellings or commercial occupancies in each district with your current fleet of vehicles. Currently, despite each district having a fleet of vehicles with some modern apparatus that is in good front line service a few minor issues or "consultant's concerns" exist in the area of apparatus for two of the three districts. The concerns this consultant sees based on visits and vehicle assessments are as follows:

1) A 1983 fire truck operated by the Seneca Castle Fire District that despite being primarily a reserve apparatus provides no modern safety features and has outlived its useful service life to a modern fire department

2) Three of four vehicles operated by the Hall Fire District being pre-1991 vehicles which according to most national experts and the NFPA should not be in front line service as emergency

vehicles due to lack of modern safety equipment and enclosed cabs where applicable.

3) A lack of a town-wide off road rescue/firefighting team equipped with ATV's and a rescue trailer to be used for off road rescues or firefighting in the many wide open areas in the Town of Seneca. 3 ATVs and supporting firefighting, rescue and operator safety equipment are recommended for a community of your size and coverage area.

As the three Fire Districts consider fleet replacement and fleet planning philosophies the following key points should be considered.

1) The specific needs of the protection area covered by each district.
2) The apparatus needs and protection challenges for the entire area of the Town of Seneca as a secondary consideration in apparatus/fleet replacement and selection considerations.
3) Established "years of service goals" for your apparatus and vehicle fleet based on three "service life phases"
    a. First due
    b. Second due
    c. Reserve
4) Cost of replacement vs. cost of maintenance of existing rigs
5) Technology or lack of it in current rigs vs. available new needed or required technology available in new rigs
6) Safety features and improvements available in new rigs
7) Actual usage of apparatus

8) Changes in equipment standards that have developed over the life of your current rigs

There are several different classes of apparatus available to fire departments today and this wide range of equipment is reflected in the current fleet of the Seneca area fire districts. These classes or categories are pumpers (including rescue pumpers), rescues, aerials and utility or service vehicles. The goal for the replacement of pumping apparatus regardless of department size or configuration should be to replace the apparatus in a systematic manner and before the apparatus becomes undependable, costly to maintain or unsafe. The useful life of a pumper or pumper/tanker in the Town of Seneca due to lower call volume will most likely be longer than some other suburban volunteer departments with higher call volumes however high call volume urban areas such as the City of Rochester may experience replacement needs much sooner than in the Town of Seneca.

It is this consultant's opinion that the useful life for a pumping or pumper tanker apparatus in the Town of Seneca that is a pre-1991 apparatus that is currently in service in the Town of Seneca should not exceed 20 years. For this review this consultant is going to recommend a 20-25 year life cycle goal for all apparatus 1991 and newer and for new large apparatus purchases in the Town of Seneca based on the following chart.

Replacement Goals for Pumpers & Pumper/Tankers

Type of Duty	**Town of Seneca** Stages of Pumper Useful Life	**Average Volunteer Dept.** Moderate to Low Use Dept.	**Comments**
Active Service	First 10 years of useful life	Stage 1 (12 years)	At this stage the apparatus is used as a front-line response unit
Active Service Second Due	Second 10 years of useful life	Stage 2 (12 years)	Truck responds when front line rig is on a call or during major incidents
Non-active Reserve or stand by status	Third and final 5 years of useful life	Stage 3 Reserve or awaiting sale	Responds only when multiple "younger" units are OOS or during major incidents. May not have full compliment of equipment

Based on current call volume in the Town of Seneca a 15 year life expectancy can be planned for light rescues, smaller squads or utility vehicles.

IN the future the fire districts or single district may consider using certain support vehicles such as S.U.V. chief's vehicles and/or pick up trucks. The national Association of Fleet Managers (NAFM) recommends replacement of autos, vans, and light trucks/SUVs in accordance with the following general standard:

Vehicle Type	NAFM Age Standard	NAFM Miles Standard
Passenger Auto	5.5	88,000
Van	7.5	88,000
Light Truck/SUV	7.5	92,000

Currently two of the three districts (Hall and Stanley) have station issues that this consultant believes may be dictating apparatus purchasing or possibly restricting apparatus replacement. Also as a general comment a number of firefighters and officers interviewed expressed a desire to be able to keep the apparatus washed and detailed during periods of inclement weather and both Stanley and Hall have difficulty doing this due to tight parking in the buildings and in Hall's case poor drainage for truck washing water outside that ultimately freezes resulting in the apparatus being more dirty than one would prefer during the winter months. Both of the above comments will be addressed more fully in the facilities section of this report. The acquisition and operation of specialized equipment such as heavy rescues, boats, ATVs, ice rescue equipment, trailers etc are not clearly specified for in the various

guides and standards written for the fire service. Pumping and aerial apparatus are specified for while the need for specialized vehicles and equipment are left up to the individual fire department or districts to determine if need exists and to select the proper equipment or vehicle to address said need. The districts should work together to evaluate the need for town wide ATV off road rescue jointly operated by the three fire departments as this consultant feels agricultural, recreational and hiking/hunting activities in the Seneca area do justify the creation of an A.T.V. and/or John Deer Gator based rescue unit with multiple ATV units for safety and manpower operated by the three Fire Departments. This proposed off road team, vehicles and equipment can be housed in a racing style 24 to 28 ft trailer lettered "Town of Seneca – Joint Fire Department Special Operations Unit" that can be pulled by a fire department vehicle when activated. This will also build interoperability and camaraderie between all three fire departments. With those points made, my review of your rigs is as follows:



HALL 1331

1994 FREIGHTLINER/CUSTOM

PUMPER TANKER – 11,000 MILES

Condition/Comments:

Very good overall condition for age

Evaluate tight packing of extrication equipment that may hinder quick deployment at scenes

Improve cleaning/detailing of apparatus



HALL 1333

1985 CHEVROLET/SANFORD – 7,000 MILES

1000 GAL PUMPER/TANKER

Condition/Comments:

Very good overall condition for age

Improve cleaning/detailing of apparatus

Pre-1991 apparatus – past recommended service life as emergency vehicle



HALL ENGINE 1332

1987 PIERCE PUMPER – 31,000 MILES

Condition/Comments:

Average condition for age

Purchased used

Improve cleaning/detailing of apparatus

Pre-1991 apparatus – past recommended service life as emergency vehicle



HALL 1371

1988 GMC/SANFORD – 8969 MILES

EQUIPMENT/SUPPORT VAN

Condition/Comments:

Average for age

Improve cleaning/detailing of apparatus

Improve restraint of equipment inside vehicle in the event of roll over accident

Pre-1991 apparatus – past recommended service life as emergency vehicle



STANLEY 2631

1999 PETERBILT/CUSTOM – 7,000 MILES

PUMPER TANKER

Condition/Comments:

Excellent condition for age

Improve cleaning/detailing of apparatus



STANLEY 2641

2010 INTERNATIONAL/PIERCE – NEW

DIESEL

Condition/Comments:

New condition



STANLEY 2651

2004 GMC/SEAGRAVE MIDI – ? MILES

Condition/Comments:

Very good condition for age



STANLEY 2671

2007 GMC/EJ METALS - ? MILES

RESCUE

Condition/Comments:

Excellent condition



SENECA CASTLE 2411

1998 FREIGHTLINER/PIERCE – 15,000 MILES

Condition/Comments:

Very good condition for age

Loose equipment in cab can become airborne in an accident.



SENECA CASTLE 2471

1993 FREIGHTLINER/CENTRAL – 16,400 MILES

RESCUE

Condition/Comments:

Average condition for age

Secure equipment in rear of rig to prevent injury if airborne in an accident



SENECA CASTLE 2441

2009 FREIGHTLINER/US TANKER – 2500 MILES

Condition/Comments:

Like new condition



SENECA CASTLE 2441 (RESERVE)

1983 FORD/FMC – 9307 MILES

PUMPER/TANKER - 1250 GAL

Condition/Comments:

Below average condition for age

Pre-1991 apparatus – past recommended service life as emergency vehicle

Chart #1

Apparatus Replacement Schedule			
Vehicle ID	**Year**	**Replace Year**	**Replacement Type**
CASTLE 2441R	1983	Past Service Life	Surplus
HALL 1333	1985	Past Service Life	Surplus
HALL 1332	1987	Past Service Life	Similar Vehicle
HALL 1371	1988	Past Service Life	Surplus
CASTLE 2471	1993	2018 (25 yrs)	Similar Vehicle
HALL 1331	1994	2019 (25 yrs)	Similar Vehicle
CASTLE 2411	1998	2023 (25 yrs)	Similar Vehicle
STANLEY 2631	1999	2024 (25 yrs)	Similar Vehicle
STANLEY 2651	2004	2024 (20 yrs)	Similar Vehicle based on need
STANLEY 2671	2007	2027 (20 yrs)	Similar Vehicle based on need

CASTLE 2441	2009	2034 (25 Yrs)	Similar Vehicle
STANLEY 2641	2010	2035 (25 yrs)	Similar Vehicle

*Note: Tankers listed above for 25 year replacement as "similar vehicle" such as Stanley #2641 may at the time be replaced with a class A pumper w/1750 gpm pump capacity due to a planned increased availability of town water via a new hydrant system being added but not fully in place at the time of this review.

*Replacement schedule listed above as independent fire districts.

*It is the belief of this consultant that Hall FD (provided they are able to obtain a modern facility where future truck size will not be restricted) can eventually move to being a two truck operation and run without the Sanford equipment truck and the pre-1991 pumper tanker. This consultant also believes that Seneca Castle due to mutual aide and other Town of Seneca based apparatus can operate properly and safely without the pre-1991 Ford/FMC pumper Tanker bringing the town wide fleet from 12 to 9 vehicles.

*It is the belief of this consultant that as a town wide fire district with three individual companies that each department could run a pumper/tanker and a tanker supported by a town wide rescue vehicle and a town wide midi pumper/brush truck bringing the total vehicles from the 9 listed above to 8. Strategically placed trailers instead of dedicated emergency vehicles can be used for occasionally needed items such as haz-mat gear, mass casualty incident gear or fire prevention items.

*In the single fire district configuration listed above, vehicles listed as tankers could eventually be replaced by rescue pumpers placed at each firehouse as town wide hydrants and water improves.

Fire Department Facilities

Fire department facilities ie; stations, were a major topic of discussion during the time this consultant spent in the Town of Seneca. There also seems to be somewhat of a split on this topic between the stakeholders who were interviewed who speak of concerns for the taxpayers, those who cannot seem to disconnect from the "good old days" of the fire service when the old firehouse was good enough and those who desire to make improvements. This consultant was able to spend enough time onsite at each firehouse to become reasonably acquainted with the stations and various other accessory structures operated by the three Districts. The following photos represent some key concerns but not all concerns noted during this review:



Hall FD Main Firehouse Has Outlived Purpose as a Firehouse



Inadequate Safe Parking for Responding Firefighters & for Fire Department Business



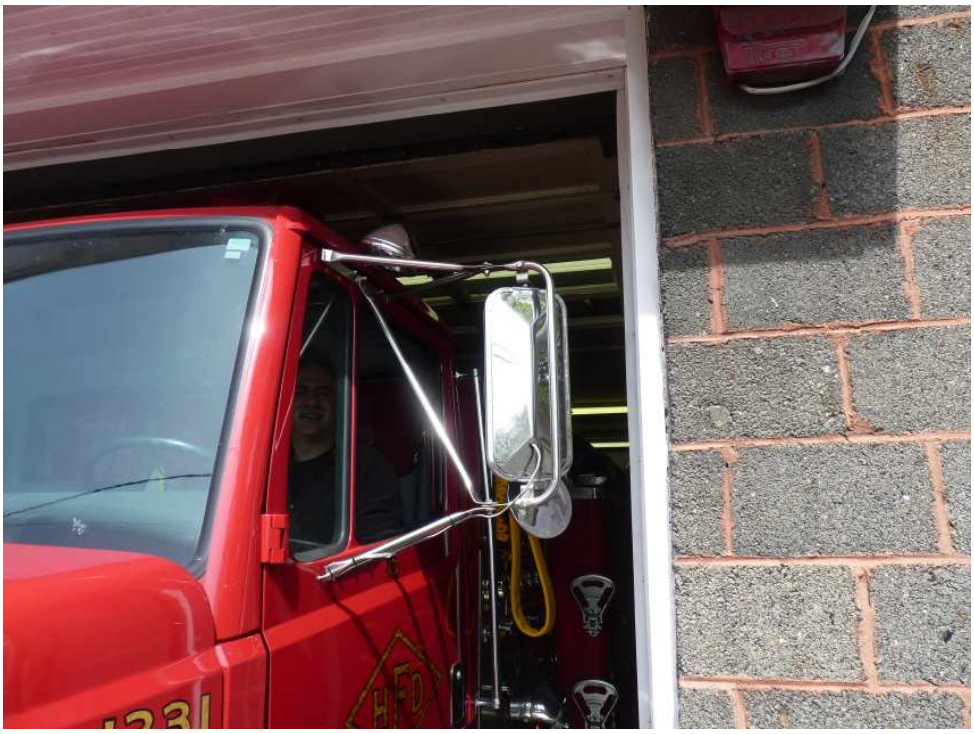
Lack of Safe Space to Operate Around Apparatus



Lack of Organized Storage Space @ Hall for Inventory Management



Lack of Appropriate/Professional Meeting/Office/Records Management Space @ Hall FD



Dangerous Pinch Points between Apparatus & Building



Dangerous Pinch Points between Apparatus & Apparatus



Tight Walkways for Multiple Firefighters Boarding Apparatus



Lack of Dedicated Training Classroom Space



Lack of Handicapped Access to 2nd Floor @ Hall FD



Dangerous Pinch Points between App. & Building @ Stanley



High Risk for Damage or Firefighter/Building/Apparatus Pinch Pt.



Appropriate, Well Planned Facility at Seneca Castle FD

Currently in the Town of Seneca, the three facilities operated by the three fire districts ranges from appropriate to high need. It was also apparent that two of the three districts were limited in the apparatus purchasing abilities due to height, width or length restrictions at their stations. This can result in additional cost for apparatus due to the need for custom design and construction specifications vs. being able to purchase standard trucks or demos where cost savings can be obtained. Also while visiting the Town of Seneca active discussions surrounding the proposed new fire station of the Hal Fire District were taking place and the primary question being raised centered on need vs. want? Currently the Hall Fire District is proposing what appears to be a primarily steel or engineered building with 4 apparatus bays. General firehouse uses are also featured in the proposed building along with a banquet/community/meeting multi-purpose room which has also been the topic of some discussion. CLEARLY a new fire station for the Hall Fire District/Department is needed. Some have questioned the need for the community room and whether or not there is a department or a community need for the space. On the date this consultant visited the Seneca Castle Fire Department facility their community room was being prepared for a party use so there does appear to be some need for community gathering space. A fire department much like a church or school does often act as a center of a community where there are chicken BBQs, birthdays, showers, weddings and other similar events. Couple that with the operations of a volunteer fire department and the community room can be used for meetings, shelter, training or even Red Cross blood drives, etc. Along the line of fire station construction often community leaders must apply the “once in 50 years” concept to this type of project. There is sometimes a mindset to build just what you need at the time you are building and nothing more. However at

the time of original construction the cost of an additional bay or 200 or 300 feet of community room space is marginal over the life of the building. It is generally this consultant's recommendation to build for the future however if the community has no level of tolerance for building for the future it is this consultant's opinion that if the Hall Fire District needed to reduce overall project cost to successfully obtain support for the project and ultimately a positive vote from the community the department could conduct its "current" operations from a new three bay facility and a facility with a reduced square footage in the proposed community room. However do not confuse this proposed reduction for consideration as any indication that the new firehouse is not needed. This consultant does feel that the facility proposed by the Hall Fire District should be built.

Regarding the Stanley Fire Department's station the organization has made good use of a retired school. However this consultant has similar concerns for operation of firefighters and apparatus in the very tight spaces in the apparatus bay area and for the restrictions on apparatus size in the Stanley FD bays. A future project for the Stanley Fire District to consider is the expansion or construction of apparatus bays that can safely accommodate modern apparatus and provides for safe operating areas for firefighters working around the apparatus such as reduced pinch point areas and areas where firefighters can enter the building, put on turn out gear and proceed to the apparatus safely. The following is a list of some comments about firehouse facilities that members of the various fire departments stated would be beneficial and improve their operations and their experience as firefighters:

1) Appropriate meeting/records storage space

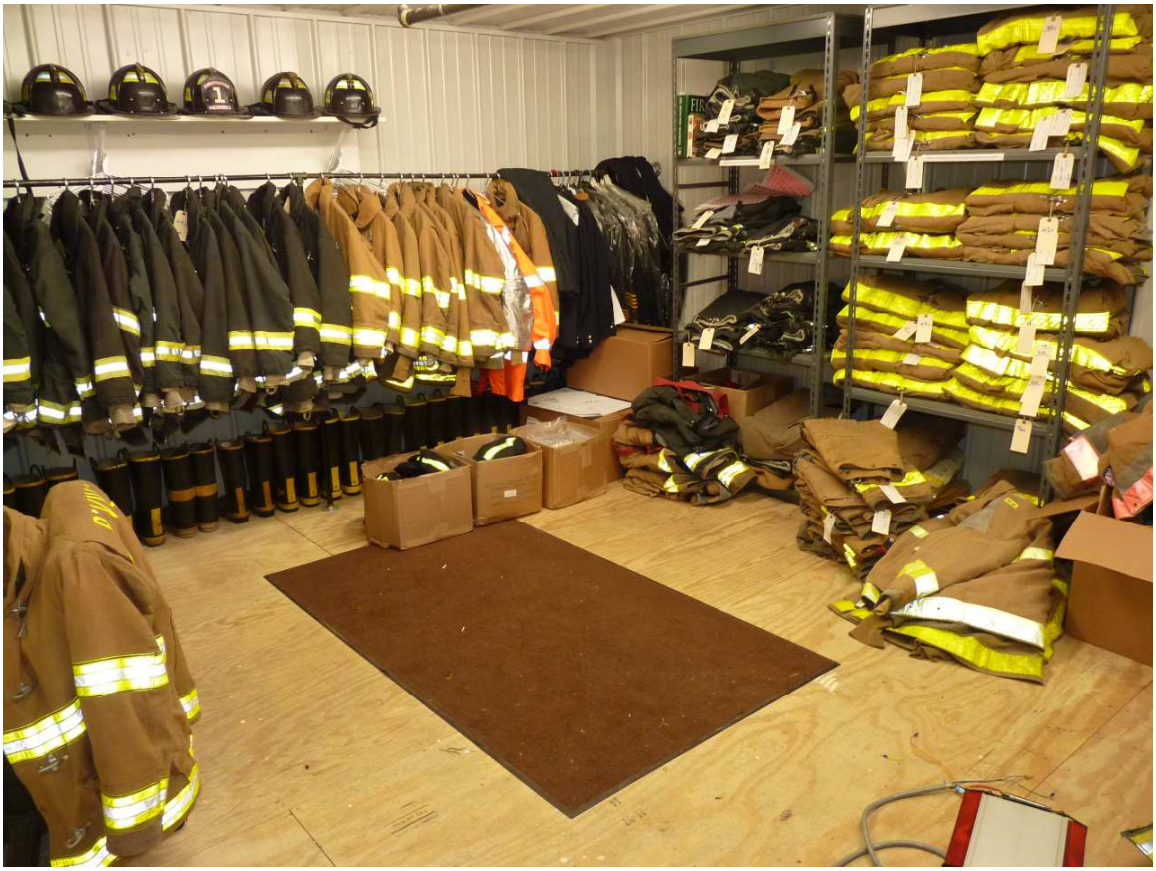
2) Multi-media training room
3) Training props such as bail out/breach or ventilation simulator
4) Appropriate area for auto extrication training
5) Clean, safe, decon showers & toilet facilities off truck bays
6) Organized parking and improved flow for arriving responders
7) Increased, organized storage for spare turnout gear
8) Turnout gear too close to some apparatus

This consultant agrees with the items noted above as desirable by firefighters. This consultant felt that the facility operated by the Seneca Castle Fire District/Department was well planned and appropriate for their operation and was an ideal station for the make up of the community. The members of Stanley and Hall Fire Districts "make" their facilities work vs. having a facility that assists in providing efficient, safe and cost effective operations. To this consultant it makes good sense to build facilities that will provide the open spaces needed to address parking, possible drive thru bays to reduce backing apparatus, outdoor training and other points noted above. Construction costs are reasonable and there are very good values available in steel buildings built by manufacturers such as "Morton" where fire departments can get considerable bang for their construction buck. The following photos are of a new station erected by another client of mine, the Baldwinsville Fire Company in Onondaga County, NY:



Cost Effective, Attractive Main Firehouse w/5 Drive thru Bays





Spare Turnout Gear Loft Storage @ Baldwinsville Fire Co.

In certain parts of New York State volunteer and/or combination fire departments have upgraded stations or done complete tear downs and ground up construction of new stations. I can confidently say that as a result of my visits to the Town of Seneca that the Hall Fire District has truly been conservative when it comes to firehouse facilities and in my opinion have maximized the life of their existing station and the time has come for the district to make a move.

District Policies, Department By-Laws

While this was primarily a review of each District's overall operations and current and long range equipment/facility needs issues, this consultant did take time to review various documents associated with the operation and management of the various Fire Districts & Departments. It was not readily apparent to this consultant that the districts had a clear set of fire district policies that appropriately address today's legal, management and ethical goals of the modern fire service and support and encourage professional district operations. I was not provided policies that covered travel, credit cards, technology/email, and other topics in place. If each district does not have these policies it is recommended that each individual commission contact Bill Young of the Fire Districts Association in Albany, NY or Michael P. Dallessandro for assistance in developing said policies. While each volunteer fire department's by-laws were not a specific area of focus each by-laws were also reviewed and found to be in generally good order when compared to other similarly sized organizations with similar resources.

Joint Station & Engine 91 Program

I would be remiss in this report if I did not at least take a few moments and make mention in a positive way of two programs that exist in the departments of clients of this consultant in Onondaga county that the Town of Seneca Fire Districts and Departments could consider that in this consultant's opinion serve as a model to fire service organizations around the country. First of all as various government leaders and anti-tax groups call for the merger, consolidation or in Suffolk County the down right elimination of a fire district(s) two of my clients, Lakeside FD and

Baldwinsville FD have developed a station lease agreement resulting in a shared station #2 by both organizations. During my visits to the Town of Seneca some fire service leaders through stakeholder interviews expressed a long range desire to have a possible fire station in the Sutton Road area. While this consultant did not do extensive research into the potential 4th station in the Town of Seneca on first glance a possible shared Stanley/Seneca Castle station similar to the Lakeside/Baldwinsville program could provide god service to that end of the town a number of years down the road. I believe that the joint station shared by Lakeside and Baldwinsville is a win-win for all parties involved including the general public and the local governments served by these two organizations. This arrangement is fiscally responsible, provides improved and more stable service in the two areas covered by the station, provides optimum use of available manpower, and results in cross training and cross department camaraderie for participating members. In essence Lakeside leases a bay from Baldwinsville at their station #2 which gives Lakeside greater coverage at a distant end of their district and places an engine close to the residences of a group of their members. The cross training element allows for both Baldwinsville and Lakeside members to ride out on each others rigs at that station to calls in either district thereby enhancing available manpower and responding rigs. A truly model program.

Second, the Engine 91 program is another excellent program aimed at providing dependable service through shared services. The Engine 91 program is a joint effort between multiple departments whereby one engine is staffed with members of the same multiple departments who respond to

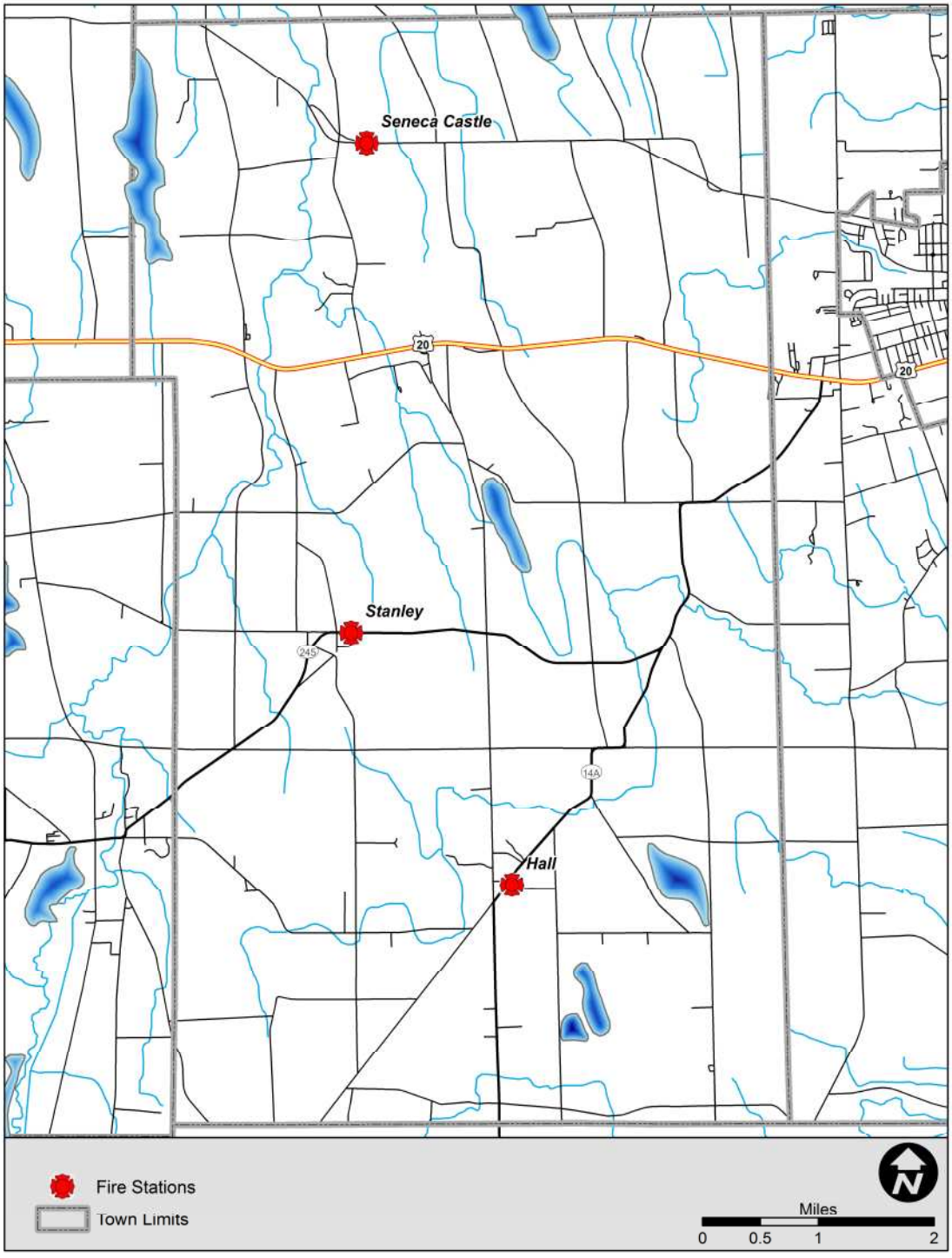
incidents in all of the participating department's response areas. Onondaga County's Engine 91 Program with an engine responding town-wide made up of a volunteer stand by crew of qualified interior firefighters from all three departments. For more information on how the Engine 91 program works please do not hesitate to contact Michael P. Dallessandro and Associates for contact information at the Lakeside or Baldwinsville Fire Departments.

E.M.S. an EVOLVING FIRE DEPT. MISSION

When assessing needs, we must look at what services are essential for fire departments to provide to their customers. The fire service should not only provide an emergency response role to its community, but also provide support functions that make the fire departments a valuable asset to their community's safety. Other programs in which this consultant feels are valuable is the training of kids with a fire safety house and a juvenile fire setters program. Currently in the Town of Seneca EMS is provided by two different organizations; a volunteer EMS service and a proprietary ambulance service. Representatives of the volunteer EMS organization were contacted via email and offered an opportunity to be interviewed for this review and via email only replied with an invitation for the Town Supervisor to meet with their leadership so he could better understand their operation. It is unknown to this consultant if this meeting ever occurred however there was no additional contact between this consultant and the volunteer ambulance organization. While it is not rare that the volunteer fire departments in the Town of Seneca do not provide the EMS function for the community it is quite clear that there may be an inconsistency in the level of emergency medical services received by the citizens of the town due to the current mix of the volunteer and paid EMS services. While this arrangement

might seem attractive to a few fire purists, it can make the departments less active. Often younger members of the volunteer fire department want more "action" and the ability to obtain EMS certifications while at the same time older members caution that EMS can tax or burn out good firefighters this consultant feels that EMS can be a vital community connection and under a larger merged fire district can provide the workload for part time or per diem firefighter/EMTs when the need for additional day time firefighters eventually grows down the road. New firefighters and per diems would most likely welcome a broader mission and have the talent in the organization to accept a broader role in emergency response. For the present, resources and time are both limited so the fire department is restricted fairly well to providing only basic fire and M.V.A. rescue services. With the eventual addition of possible per diem in-station personnel, new activities can be better supported in the future. As currently organized and equipped the fire departments in the town will continue to serve the fire protection needs of the community but should be open to an expanding mission in the future. Because of the close relationship between fire service and EMS services the Fire Departments should, to the extent possible continue to assist the EMS agencies in their mission and be receptive to assistance in return.

Mergers & Consolidation



During the process of conducting this review this consultant reviewed the Town of Seneca Comprehensive Planning document developed by the Peter

J. Smith Company and published/released in October of 2002. This document contained a considerable amount of information that despite being almost 12 years old proved to be appropriate for our current environment both financially and politically in our communities here in New York. This consultant took note of one particular paragraph that seemed applicable to the current fire district review project

This paragraph reads as follows:

Policy 6.1: Ensure that the Stanley Fire Company, Hall Fire Company and Seneca Castle Fire Company are adequately staffed.

Action 6.1.1:

As the fire and ambulance companies of many rural communities are staffed on a voluntary basis it is imperative to assure that these services are sufficiently staffed to provide quick response times. The Town of Seneca should provide continuing assistance to these agencies by publicizing the need for volunteers. The Town should also foster cooperation among the companies such as sharing equipment and staff. The entire topic of mergers and consolidation of once all volunteer fire departments rich with history and tradition is not an easy pill for this consultant to swallow. However the facts remain that in some areas choices will eventually have to be made. The question remains who will make those choices, the members of the fire service who have the knowledge and background to do it right or will those changes be forced by external organizations such as political figures or town's people? Hopefully the leaders of the various fire districts and departments that serve the Town of Seneca will have the clear heads to get to the table and at least have civil discussions about shared services or

mergers that is respectful of their organization's proud past and cognizant of sound fire service management practices of the future. At the start of this review this consultant proposed that the he would look at this project from 4 viewpoints.

1) No change
2) Increased mutual aide
3) Increased shared services
4) Joint or Merged Fire Department of Fire District.

In 2002 when the aforementioned comprehensive plan was created and released, approximately 40 action items were listed as areas of interest to the community leaders who participated in the comprehensive plan process. Of those 40 or so items sub-categories were created and broken down as 1st, 2nd and 3rd choice categories. Approximately 10-12 action items of various ideas and concepts were listed under each choice category heading. The combining of firehouses was listed as an item on the list of 3rd choice options of actions that the community felt was desirable. Please note that while this was an option it was far down the list and numerous other action items were listed in the 1st and 2nd choice categories. Also contained in the same document a survey question about fire department service levels showed that 74% of the people responding felt that there should be no change in the level of fire department services while 15% felt fire department services should increase and the remaining number of respondents suggested some level of reduction. It is this consultant's opinion that overall today's Seneca community would most likely respond the same way to the same questions regarding their desired level of fire department

services. Regarding **"no change"** it is the belief of this consultant that based on current call volume and a low number of housing starts in the Town of Seneca (*13 in 2009-2010 *per Town of Seneca Code Enforcement Officer*) that each district/and department would continue to march along doing their best to serve their respective districts and response areas restricted only by their financial or lack of financial resources and limited manpower. Would facilities and apparatus concerns be addressed? Would volunteer firefighters be available during the day when needed? Would the organizations be prepared for the changes and mandates that will continue to come down the road for all fire departments in the state of New York? Will looming tax cap legislation or additional scrutiny of special districts cause greater financial concerns for small volunteer fire departments? While there are no sure answers to these question it is the belief of this consultant that small rural fire departments and districts are the least prepared to handle increased management and training mandates and the lack of volunteer members going forward. Larger volunteer fire departments with operation budgets well into the high six figures are feeling the pinch of mandates such as bail-out ropes, high cost accountant's audits and the additional career staff to address the inability of working individuals with families to dedicate the considerable hours meeting training and membership requirements of today's all volunteer fire departments. Sadly this consultant believes that small, rural organizations will not be able to "go it alone" much longer so "no change" is not a viable option looking out much more than 5 years.

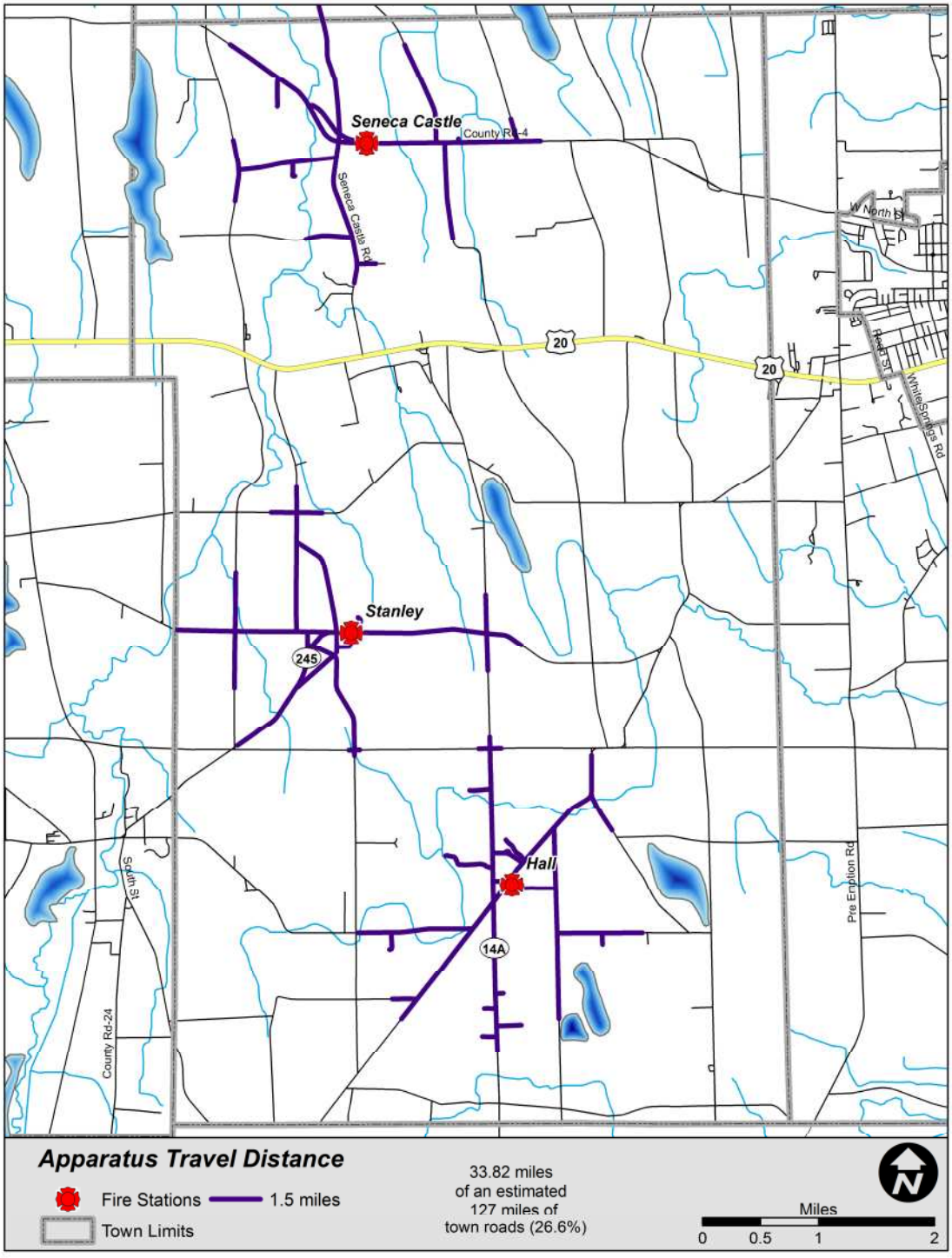
Increased mutual aide is often touted by community leaders as the answer to equipment needs and manpower needs for communities who have volunteer fire departments that are struggling. First of all this consultant believes that

in many areas of our state mutual aide is already an accepted standard for delivering fire and emergency services for medium to large incidents. Mutual aide has never been intended to serve as an option for providing day to day fire and emergency services to a community. Currently Stanley FD has a working mutual aide agreement/relationship with a neighboring organization providing cross community coverage. While this consultant feels that this is admirable and has fostered an excellent relationship between the two organizations this consultant feels that the three departments within the Town of Seneca should and could be working more closely together which would increase knowledge of each department's resources, personnel, vehicles, leadership styles, etc. This consultant, while desiring a greater working relationship among Town of Seneca Fire Departments does not see increased mutual aide as providing the best long term service delivery or financial stability option for the Town of Seneca. Regarding the additional option of shared services this consultant is a strong proponent of shared services when there is considerable redundancy among larger well funded fire departments in one community. Such as communities that may have multiple large rescue units or aerial devices. The fire departments that serve the Town of Seneca each has a basic compliment of fire protection equipment with little if any redundancy of specialized equipment, vehicles or tools. Therefore a recommendation of increased shared services is not seen by this consultant as a viable option for the future management of Town of Seneca fire services.

The last option to be considered and the option that this consultant will recommend to insure the long term viability of the fire services in the Town of Seneca is a joint or merged Fire District structure. Currently there are two

layers of fire service management and operations in the Town of Seneca, the fire districts which are the taxing entities and the fire departments or companies which are the organizations that are made up of the volunteers and chiefs who respond to extinguish fires and handle other related emergencies in the Town. Clearly from the stakeholder interviews and information obtained from a variety of sources the community and the firefighters place significant value on their hamlet based organizations. Clearly there is not as much vocal connection to the individual districts per say as there is to the individual departments. It is quite clear to this consultant that no later than 2013 a committee made up of representatives of each fire district, a local government representative, a county representative and an attorney experienced in fire district mergers should be established to move towards the creation of a single town wide fire district responsible for providing the fire protection throughout the town of Seneca to be completed and created no later than January 1, 2015. The concept of a single town wide fire department was discussed at numerous times through this review and it is the opinion of this consultant that services and response times would suffer per the following GIS mapping data that was developed for this review:

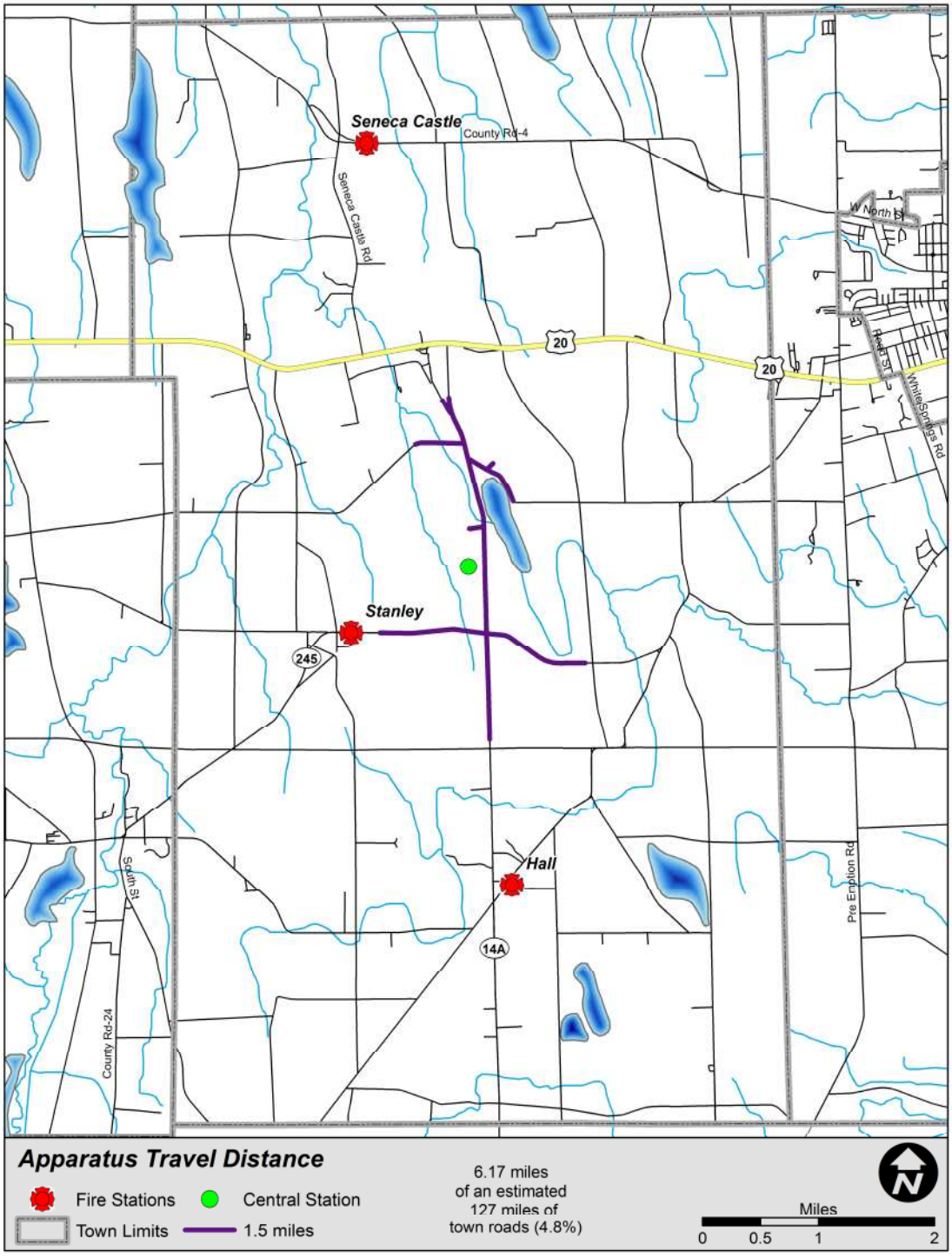
Current I.S.O. Coverage Based on the 3 Station Model



Page #1 of the 02/03 edition of the ISO's fire suppression rating schedule document item #101 Scope reads "*the schedule is a fire insurance rating*

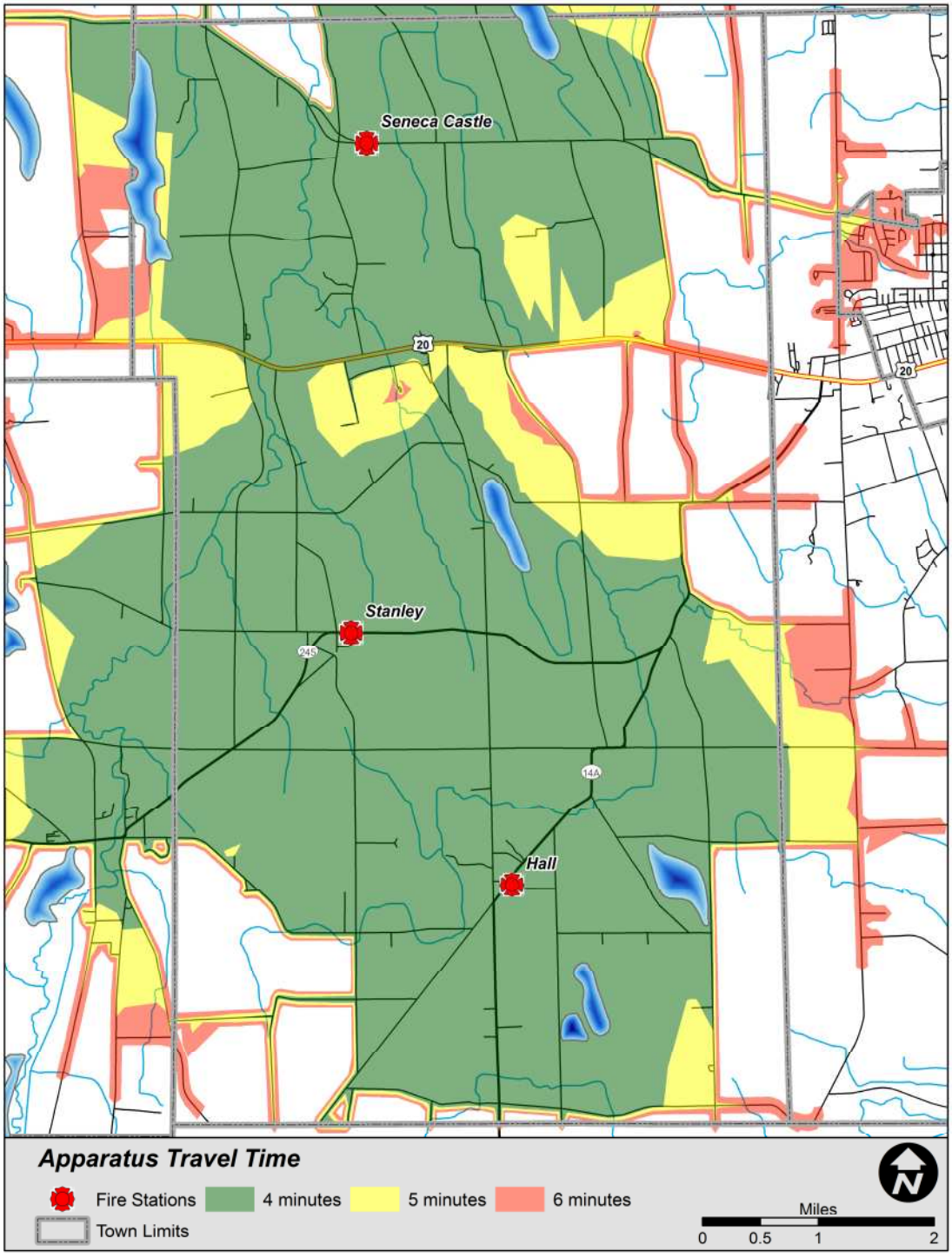
tool, and is not intended to analyze all aspects of a comprehensive public fire protection program. It should not be used for purposes other than insurance ratings" makes the statement quite clear that ISO is not the "be all/end all" for fire protection and is basically only used for the determination of business insurance rates and not residential. State Farm Insurance has drifted away from using ISO as the sole determining factor for formulating insurance rates. Nonetheless travel distance is travel distance and under the current three station model in the Town of Seneca the previous chart shows that just over 33 miles of town roads are covered with fire protection in the I.S.O.'s recommended 1.5 mile area. As shown in the next chart moving to a single town wide fire station would significantly reduce the areas of the town that are covered with a fire apparatus within 1.5 miles.

I.S.O. Coverage under a Single Centrally Located Station



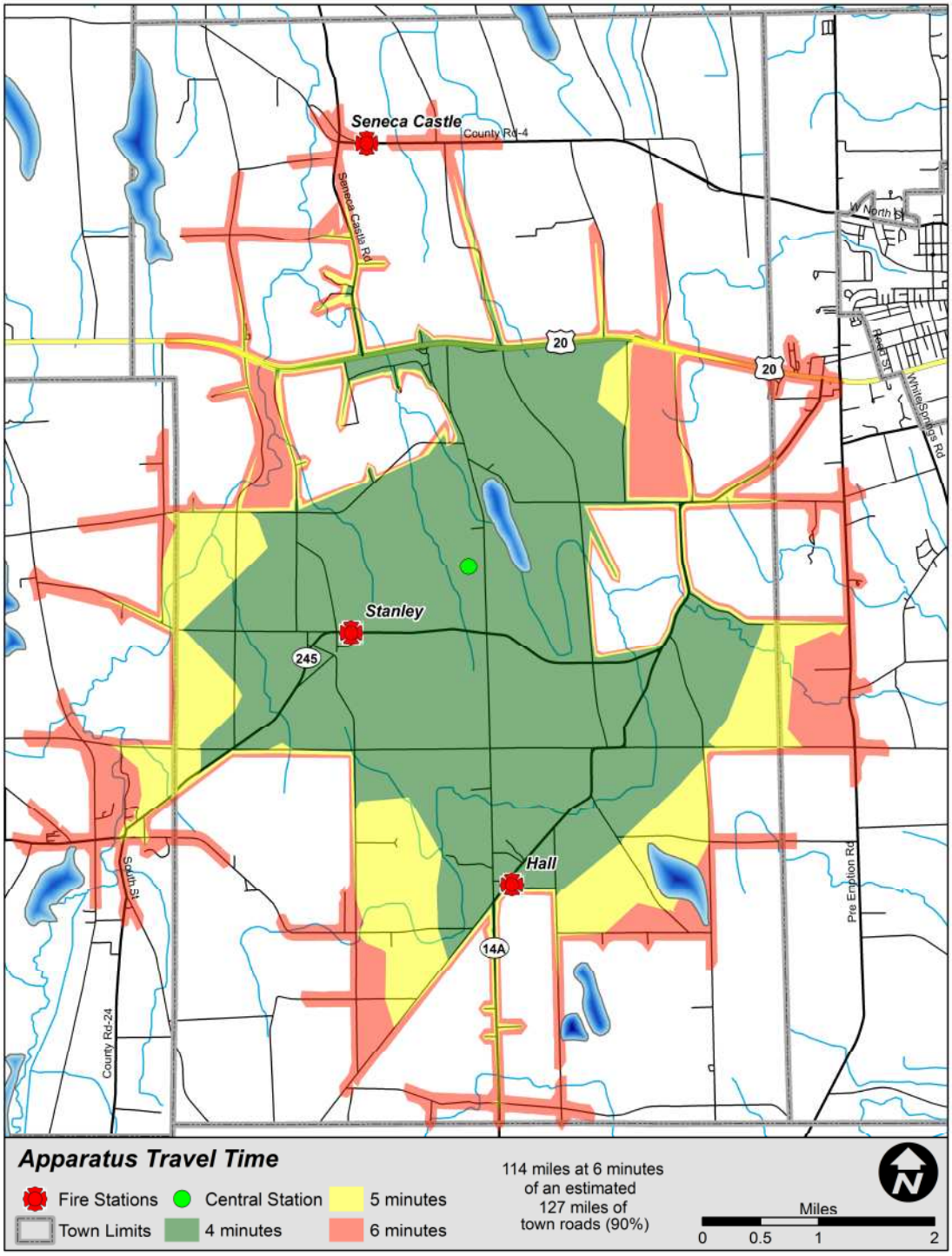
As you can see from the above chart a centrally located station will reduce areas covered with 1.5 mile I.S.O. coverage from 33% to 4.8%.

Response Time Comparison



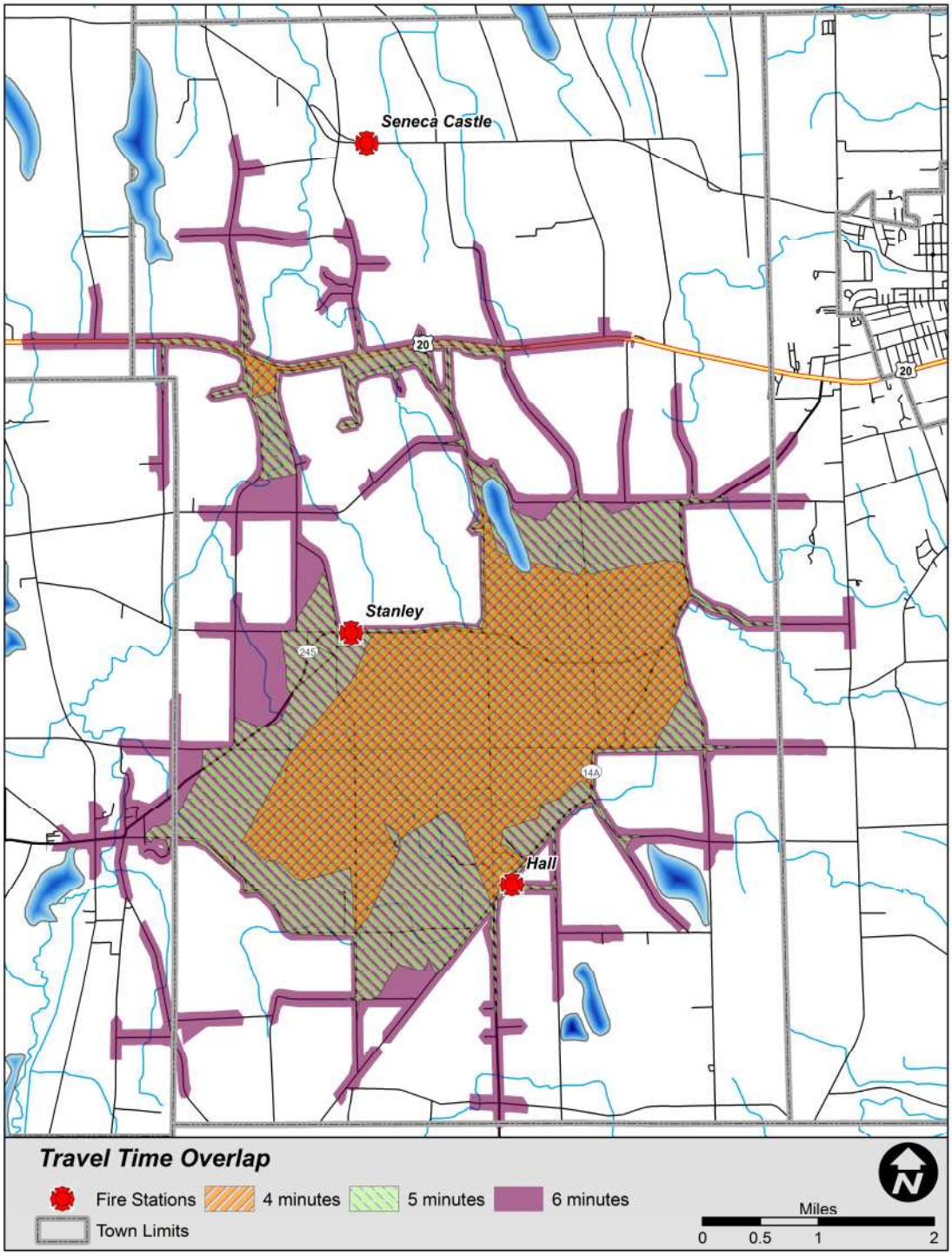
Currently noted above the Town under its three station model enjoys strong response times from station to incident in the 4 minute range.

Response Times from a Single Town Wide Station



*Clearly from the above chart a single station reduces the area with a 4 minute station to incident response time considerably.

Response Time Overlap under Current Three Station Model



Clearly maintaining the current three station and fire company model preserves service levels and hamlet/company identity while creating the single fire district provides the community wit the stability of a larger management entity which can result in the following benefits:

1) Equal distribution of fire protection dollars and resources on a town wide level.
2) Increased buying power for all things fire department such as turn out gear, apparatus, tools, equipment, etc.
3) Ability to establish capitol reserves faster via the combined budgets of the three districts creating one new unified budget.
4) Town wide representation on the single Board of Fire Commissioners.
5) Ability to manage EMS contracts or for the provision of E.M.S. through the ability to hire part-time/per diem or career firefighter/EMTs as the long term need presents itself.
6) Possible increased representation for fire department needs at the County or State level via a single larger fire district in the Town of Seneca.

INSURANCE SERVICES OFFICE (ISO)

Nationally, the frequency and severity of fires are declining. Although fire suppression services are, in terms of total responses, becoming less frequent, they remain the most important services delivered by the fire departments when fires do occur. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is an independent auditing organization funded by insurance companies. The ISO conducts a thorough site visit to the community and analyzes fire stations, staffing levels, fire apparatus, equipment carried on apparatus, training records,

water supply, and all the other component parts that affect the quality of fire service delivery. The ISO rates fire departments on a scale of 1 (the very best) to 10 (the most deficient). As previously mentioned although *State Farm* and some other large insurance companies have discontinued using ISO ratings in favor of a ―zip code based rating system, the ISO rating scale remains the most widely accepted objective measure of fire protection.

This agency, which is administered under a coalition of the large insurance carriers throughout North America, performs audits of fire service delivery capabilities in communities on a regular basis. This consultant believes that the town's improvements in water availability combined with regular hose testing, equipment updating and some training enhancements will allow the departments to maintain their current rating and possibly improve by one numerical value over the next few years. In some improving rural areas of the country residential rates are improved as the classification improves beyond a 9 up to the rating of 6. Ratings of 1 to 6 provide the same lower premiums for *residential* units. Commercial savings continue with lower classifications from 1 to 6.

Firefighter Training

The expression in the volunteer fire service that "we do things this way because we have always done them that way." or "100 years of tradition not impeded by progress" is no longer acceptable in the fire and rescue services career or volunteer. The above statements are often based upon information remembered from training or "drill nights" from the "good ole days" that spent more time flowing water and later playing cards at the firehouse by those making such statements. Today there are current nationally recognized standards, rules and laws regarding safety operations at every type of

incident, training, and incident command, just to mention a few areas. Failure of any agency to follow those standards, even when a department or community has not formally adopted them, brings the risk of public scrutiny and the possibility of successful legal action against the districts/departments, the governing body and the individuals in charge. Individuals and their agencies can be assured that if they are involved in a legal action for perceived failures to follow generally accepted standards for performance, their individual training records or lack thereof combined with the skills of the trainers will be used to establish the foundation for those failures. Beyond the potential for negative legal actions, the failure to maintain current training in Safety and Incident Management by those who are in, or may be in, command positions also creates a potential for failure of the primary mission of all officers to assure the safety of those in their command as well as assuring the safety of the public they serve.

There is a wide range of mandated training across this nation that applies to fire and rescue services. In New York State, the authority having jurisdiction, i.e., the fire district or local government sets standards for volunteer firefighters. However, the Public Employees Safety and Health Act, Article 27a, New York State Labor Law, requires that all individuals be trained to the task or job they are to perform. Under the PESH Act, volunteer firefighters are considered public employees, (case reference: Harnett v Ballston Spa). It is important to note that even when an agency may have well qualified instructors within the agency, it is vital for the safety of all responders that personnel from every station receive the same level of training and that the training is recorded properly. New York State has mandated training for paid firefighters under NYS paid ff §426.7 In-service fire training; permanently appointed firefighters and fire officers normally

assigned to command company operations at emergencies shall annually receive a minimum of 100 contact hours of in- service training …. in a wide range of subject areas. While this NY law applies to paid firefighters, the fact remains that career and volunteer firefighters all face the same dangers. Volunteers and career firefighters all make the same life and death decisions in the performance of their duties and must be properly trained to do so for their own safety and the community's safety. This is the primary reason that The New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control and NYS Labor Laws and PESH article 27 recognize volunteer firefighters as employees. Many states today require public safety agencies to adopt the National Incident Management System Incident Command System (NIMS ICS). NIMS ICS is a system that provides a consistent nationwide approach for federal, state and local governments to work effectively together to prepare, respond and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of the cause, size or complexity. Proper training for incident management by all personnel and leaders is a primary safety concern for responders and the community. One of the most basic training requirements has long been a part of the ISO fire protection rating program. The following is a summary of the training issues ISO considers when reviewing a community's training for firefighters:

- Facilities and aids: Drill tower, Fire building (including smoke room), Combustible-liquid pit, Library and training manuals, Slide or overhead projectors, Movie projector or VCR, Pump cutaway, Hydrant cutaway
- Use: Half-day (3-hour) drills, 8 per year; Half-day (3-hour) multiple-company drills, 4 per year; Night drills (3-hour), 2 per year

- Company training: Company training at fire stations, 20 hours per member per month for full training credit
- Classes for officers: 2 days (6 hours each) per year for all officers
- Driver and operator training: 4 half-day (3-hour) sessions per year
- New-driver and operator training: Classes for new drivers and operators, 40 hours
- Training on radioactivity or hazardous materials: 1 half-day (3-hour) session per member per year
- Recruit training: 240 hours per recruit

During this review each individual fire department was asked for their drill and or training information. While each organization did in fact produce documents that regular training is being conducted and attendance is being recorded it should be the goal of the three districts/departments to move towards a single town wide training schedule that provides the opportunity for firefighters to meet the aforementioned training goals via weeknight training dates, week day training dates and weekend training dates. It is recommended that to achieve this town wide training goal and increased interoperability and camaraderie that a training committee be established with a chief and training officer from each department to annually develop the training calendar and to recruit, train and mentor trainers for each drill session to insure a quality program occurs.

General Strategies and Goals for Success:

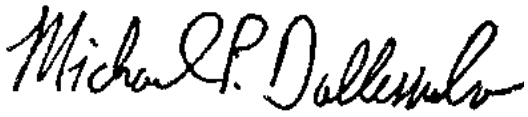
1) Review this report for information and general recommendations.
2) Advance fire station construction project for Hall FD.
3) Consider truck bay expansion for safety purposes at Stanley FD.
4) Review apparatus recommendations and replacement schedule
5) Establish a task force with the Volunteer Fire Associations, district liaisons, neighboring fire departments and Town of Seneca local government leaders to address recruitment and retention issues.
6) Encourage meetings to drive discussions for long term success in the fact finding on the topic of merged and/or consolidated fire districts so the fire service leaders in your community can provide the answers for taxpayers and government leaders as to whether the concept can work or not work for your area. In other words the fire service leaders should "drive the bus" – not the citizens or government on discussions about mergers or consolidations in the fire service.

Closing Remarks:

It has been this consultant's sincere honor and privilege to serve the Town of Seneca and to get to know the members of the Hall, Stanley and Seneca Castle Fire Districts and Departments even better. I also appreciate being able to get a more in-depth look at each district's operations. The all volunteer fire service as we know it, is facing many challenges in 2011 and beyond, such as increased training and call requirements, increased costs

coupled with greater competition for a member's free time from outside sources and competing recreational and employment based activities. The years ahead will not be easy for volunteer fire departments especially the smaller rural operations including those in the Town of Seneca. In this consultant's opinion I believe that the Fire Districts in the Town of Seneca will do the right thing by working to preserve the valuable fire department operations currently found in the Town of Seneca while at the same time STRONGLY looking towards a single fire district model to insure that the groundwork is mapped out for future generations to be in a solid position to build a "lean and mean" fire/rescue operation for the future. By simply thinking out of the traditional box and commissioning a review such as this I believe you have already taken progressive measures or are a major part of progressive measures in your area to prepare for these challenges.

Respectfully Submitted,



Michael P. Dallessandro www.respondsmart.com