20 tough questions to ask your fire department
(adapted from the ICMA)

1. How does the performance and cost of our program objectively benchmark against others with similar volumes and demographics, and where can we get the data to answer questions?

2. Are stations in the right locations to optimize our response capabilities and resources?

3. How many response resources is the "right" amount for fire calls? For medical calls? What tells us that this is correct?

4. What is an acceptable productivity level to expect from EMS personnel?

5. What is an evidence-based and legally defensible response-time goal for our community, and how often do we reach critical response levels (i.e., too few units)?

6. Many communities use a 90th-percentile response time as a standard for first arriving units. What is our response time standard?

7. Do we need to send a fire apparatus to calls, including all medical requests from 911?

8. Do units need to respond with lights and sirens to all 911 calls, despite the nature of the complaint?

9. How much down time do our fire and EMS personnel have while waiting for calls? How do we evaluate the "right" number and schedules for staffing?

10. How does our department treat the standards that are published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Insurance Services Office (ISO)—as requirements or as guidelines?

11. Fire-related responses are declining significantly. When are the numbers low enough to consider consolidating or contracting with another community? Are there other alternatives to having our own fire department?

12. Some communities are selectively closing station (i.e., enacting rolling brownouts) to reduce costs. What are the benefits and risks of this strategy?

13. In addition to providing medical first response service, should our fire department get into or out of the business of transporting patients?

14. Should we consider getting into the business of non-emergency transports (interfacility and scheduled transports) and the extra revenue that might bring?

15. Regardless of what others are doing, is *our* fire department better positioned to provide EMS transportation in our community than other organizations? What factors should be considered?

16. Besides privatization, what strategies could be used to improve efficiency of our service?

17. Can service levels be enhanced without changing the governance structure or making significant additional investments?

18. How can we be assured that the processes, procedures, and protocols utilized in managing our emergency service agencies reflect current best practice? Where are we getting our information?

19. Fire and EMS are dangerous occupations and generate significant internal and external litigation. How should our fire and EMS system evaluate and mitigate both safety and legal risks associated with providing these services?

20. Emergency services represent a large percentage of our community's budget. How do we show the taxpayers we are getting the best value for the dollars we spend?

The New Reality - Refusing to Change is No Longer an Option

Are you dealing with change as a result of the recent recession?

Feeling pressure from all sides, including your citizens?

Trying to come up with solutions to deal with the issues and still maintain reasonable levels of service?

This workshop presentation will arm you with the information you need to
- Better understand the issues
- Develop a plan for the future
- Answer the tough questions about the long-term survival and sustainability of your department in a post-recession environment
- Understand the rules and expectations have changed.