



June 2009

**Joint Position Statement of the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association and the International Association of Fire Fighters Regarding the Economic Crisis**

**We acknowledge the current economic reality-** The value of the assets used to generate local government revenue has plummeted. Local governments across North America are contemplating or proposing decreases in size and/or reductions in the span and depth of their services. The Fire Service is often caught up in that contraction. We must weather this storm by having a realistic strategy grounded in the safety and security of firefighters, paramedics and the public at large.

**We must be prepared for the long haul-** Where the economic crisis is concerned, we have several more budget cycles during which we may be dealing with the effects of this recession. It took years of bad decisions at the federal level to get here and it will likely take years to get out. Many of the most fundamental elements of our economy have been dangerously weakened including employment rates, home ownership, property tax revenue, and federal/state aid to local government in spite of the federal stimulus package.

**We must keep 'all hazard' emergency response personnel as safe as possible-** A fire company should be able to function as an independent unit at the scene of a fire in order to permit the Incident Commander to employ the proper tactics and strategies to safeguard the occupants of the building, as well as the operating force and to protect the property of the public. Whenever understaffing necessitates the combination of two companies to accomplish a specific task at the scene of a fire, which normally could be completed by one effective unit, the standard operating procedures are dramatically and adversely affected.

Adequate staffing is imperative at the individual fire company level. In order to permit the effective operation of fire companies at the scene of a structure fire, the minimum number of personnel on both engine and ladder companies must be 4 members per unit for low hazard environments and 5 or 6 members per unit for medium and high hazard (high risk) environments.

**We must assure that any operational adjustments made, ensure the safety and well-being of firefighters, paramedics and the public -** As labor and management leaders, our core mission is to ensure safe, efficient and effective operations for firefighters responding to aid a public call for help. All resource decisions must be viewed in light of these fundamental requirements. Accordingly, if a decision is made to reduce departmental resources, it must never be accomplished by reducing company crew size on apparatus.



**We must be relevant-** Fire and Rescue Departments positioned to provide the widest range of life safety services, especially integrated fire and emergency medical response, are likely to enjoy the highest level of resource security during the toughest of times. We must acknowledge and promote our ‘all hazards’ nature.

**We must learn and grow-** Out of this experience will emerge a fire service with leaders at every level that are smarter and wiser. We should take this opportunity to learn as much as we can because the future is full of challenges. We must share these valuable lessons with new leaders.