



FIRE DEPARTMENT

9 METROTECH CENTER

BROOKLYN, N.Y. 11201-3857



NICHOLAS SCOPPETTA
Fire Commissioner

July 26, 2005

Peter Gorman
President
Uniformed Fire Officers Association
225 Broadway – Suite 401
New York, New York 10007

Dear Mr. Gorman:

Thank you for meeting with me on July 7, 2005, and for your follow-up letter of July 12. I'm encouraged by the substance of our discussions, especially the following points of agreement we share on trying to reduce response times:

- The need for fast and efficient turnout from quarters at all times.
- The importance of responding to medical emergencies with the same sense of urgency as structural fires.
- The need for prompt transmittal of the 10-84 signal.

I especially am pleased and encouraged by your promise to address these issues directly with your membership, and by your statement that you hoped to “ratchet down the rhetoric in the press.”

As for your personal preference for adherence to NFPA standards, the regulations governing emergency vehicle response is clearly an operational decision that is the responsibility of the Department. The safety of firefighters and fire officers is also our responsibility - one we take very seriously. Our comprehensive accident reduction program, begun last year by the Safety Command, has so far this year reduced accidents dramatically. Intersection accidents – which tend to be the most serious - are down 47 percent.

As you know, the Department for decades has had a policy in place that coincided with that NFPA rule – although for practical reasons those rules were routinely ignored by our chauffeurs and officers. Despite the fact that we have had more than 1,700 apparatus accidents in the last few years, no one lobbied me to strictly enforce these regulations. Again, I believe that the regulation made little sense for this Department. (I

should point out that the above-mentioned 1,700 accidents represent less than 0.06% of some 2.7 million fire apparatus responses over the past three-plus years, and that many of these accidents were very minor.)

I believe it is disingenuous for anyone to suggest that any of our chauffeurs have ever done anything other than what our regulations now clearly state: respond as quickly and as safely as possible. These are common sense regulations that provide clear and unambiguous direction to our chauffeurs and officers.

Contrary to your statement that the Department's reaction to the recent accident involving L-120 was "casual", we are very concerned about this incident. The Safety Command is conducting an investigation and, once that investigation is complete, we will take whatever actions are appropriate. I do not believe that, at this time, it is advisable to have the members of L-120 make a training video based on this accident. Be assured, however, that the circumstances of the incident will be incorporated into the existing training sessions of our ongoing accident reduction program, as well as our chauffeur training program.

Again, I want to express my thanks for agreeing to open up lines of communication on the issue of response times. Response times to emergencies are one of our most significant performance measures and we have always taken pride in the speed with which we respond. However, the significant increases in response times we have experienced in the last six months mandate our joint attention and efforts to reduce them. I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that the Department remains in the forefront of safety and public service.

I am enclosing for your review the data we discussed at our meeting on July 12, which is culled from the Department's Management Indicator Reporting System (MIRS). I have provided the same information to UFA President Stephen Cassidy.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Scoppetta