



IAO Commercial & Residential Risk Services
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PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

REPORT

ON

THE CITY OF THOROLD FIRE DEPARTMENT

AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

BY

MICHAEL G. MCKENNA

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THOROLD FIRE
DEPARTMENT

CITY OF THOROLD

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INTRODUCTION

The Thorold Fire Department is well managed and under competent supervision and provides a generally good level of fire protection. Changes have been noted since our last survey including the Training Officer/Fire Prevention Officer position has been separated into two (2) positions, one (1) additional career firefighter has been employed, the Fire Department communications have been contracted out to the St. Catherines Fire Department, a new Fire Hall No. 2 has been constructed at a location better able to serve its area, as well as to provide support to Fire Hall No. 3, three (3) new apparatus (Pumper 2, Aerial 2 and Rescue 2) has been acquired to replace older vehicles. Improvements have been made to the habitability of Fire Hall No. 5 (Port Robinson "West") and the department has embarked on a defibrillator programme to enhance its emergency medical response program.

During a recent management study done for the City, the Fire Department was compared to other municipalities with similar populations. This type of comparison is risky at best as it does not compare with the actual make-up municipality, including the area and layout, the size and the number of industrial and commercial properties and other factors. The municipalities compared with Thorold, all having basically the same population, are not comparable as to the level of fire protection required. They either have a smaller industrial base (Port Colborne), are compact bedroom communities (Grimsby), are a small main community with limited commercial/industrial properties and large rural areas with scattered residential development (Whitchurch-Stouffville) or a bedroom residential communities with very limited commercial properties and a large rural area (East Gwillimbury). We do not, and never have, compared municipalities and in our long experience there are no two alike and each one is surveyed and analyzed with regards to its own protection requirements.

ADMINISTRATION

The Fire Department, as previously stated, is well managed. However, the decision to not to replace the Deputy Fire Chief will severely hamper the management of the Fire Department as the Chief and Deputy are the only managerial (non union) positions at the Fire Department. It is strongly recommended that the City reconsider its position and appoint a Deputy Fire Chief upon the promotion of the present Deputy Chief to Chief in December, 1996.

Although, since as our last survey, there are some criteria (including the completion of an officer's course and a minimum of five (5) years on the Fire Department) to stand for election the Department still annually elect all part-time (volunteer) District Chiefs, Captains and Lieutenants. It is recommended that this practice immediately be stopped and that officers be chosen upon basis of ability and on the basis of any examinations (written, oral or practical) the department may wish to apply. The officer, once appointed, should be removed only for cause.

TRAINING

The Fire Department has a good overall training programme and has adopted the Ontario Fire Marshal's curriculum guidelines for qualifications. Since our last survey, the City made the progressive move to separate the Training Officer/Fire Prevention Officer position into two (2) individual positions, however, recently the Training Officer has been put on a firefighting shift. ~~This has had a detrimental affect on the department's training programme and has led to each station having its own way of "doing things" and in addition, the career firefighters (with the exception of the shift that the Training Officer is on) do not receive his attention as was previously done.~~ In addition, the Training Officer is unable to attend part-time training sessions to ensure that all training is carried out on a department wide format.

It is recommended that the Training Officer be removed from the firefighting shift and placed on a flexible day shift so that he can set-up a department wide training programme and schedule and also attend evening part-time training sessions as required to carry out and monitor the programme for consistency in all fire halls. This flexible shift would also allow him to train with the on-duty career firefighters on regular basis.

Presently, the Fire Department personnel cannot attend courses at the Ontario Fire Marshal's College and elsewhere or specialized conferences (such as Fire Chiefs', Fire Prevention Officers',

Mechanical Officers' and Training Instructors'). This seriously inhibits Fire Department staff in keeping-up with changing methods and trends in the fire service. It is recommended that the Fire Department personnel (both career and part-time) be not only be permitted but encouraged to attend training course and seminars to increase their knowledge in their field.

FIRE PREVENTION

Since our last survey, the City has created the Fire Prevention Officer position from a previous joint Training Officer/Fire Prevention Officer position. This had the affect of increasing the public education programme provided, as well as increasing the inspection frequency of the various occupancies in the City. Lately however, the city has assigned (like the Training Officer) the Fire Prevention Officer to a firefighting shift. The immediate effect of this has been to basically stop the regular fire prevention inspection programme in the City. In addition, it has made him available (when firefighting duties permit) only on day shift four (4) days out of every sixteen (16) and even this availability can be reduced by days and working shifts on weekends and statutory holidays. It is strongly recommended that the Fire Prevention Officer be returned to a flexible day shift.

At the present time, the Deputy Chief (who has experience in this area) has been able to handle some of the situations requiring immediate action but this will cease with his promotion to Chief in December as he will no longer have the time available.

We consider fire prevention/public eduction programme to be a very important part of a Fire Department's operations (it also is 20% of the City's commercial grading) and therefore, recommend that the Fire Prevention Officer be immediately removed from firefighting duties and returned to fire prevention work.

Prior to his assignment to fire suppression shift, the Fire Prevention Officer had been working on an in-service training programme to train on-shift staff to conduct fire prevention inspections of less hazardous properties. This programme was curtailed by his assignment to a shift. It is recommended that when the Fire Prevention Officer is returned to fire prevention duties he finalize and initiate the training of on-shift staff for this in-service programme.

COMMUNICATIONS

Since our last survey, the Fire Department has contracted out its alarm answering and dispatching to the St. Catharines Fire Department. This has been a progressive move as it allows the

Department's calls to be handled from a modern computerized dispatching facility and also allows faster response of on-duty career personnel as they no longer have to wait for the arrival of a part-time firefighter before leaving the communication centre. In addition, the computerized records availability of the St. Cathrines Fire Department allows greater efficiency in processing response records.

STAFFING

i) Career

For the fire protection potential in the City, it has very minimal on-duty staffing. There are municipalities with a lower requirement for fire protection and responding to fewer emergency calls with more on-duty staffing. This includes one municipality used in the management study comparison which has three (including a captain) assigned to each shift.

As previously mentioned, the Fire Prevention Officer and Training Officer should be removed from shift work. This would result in a better coordinated training programme and a much better fire prevention and public education programme. However, the on-duty staffing should not be reduced but rather enhanced to provide a minimum of two (2) on-duty at all times. This would require an additional three (3) firefighters for a total of ten (10) (which provides an allowance for training, lieu days, sick days and vacation time).

The ultimate goal should be to provide at least three (3) personnel on each shift which will allow the on-duty staff to act as a pumper company at times when all three are on-duty and will provide a minimum of two on-duty at all times.

When present staffing falls below two (2) the emergency medical response and the defibrillator programme is in jeopardy as a minimum of two (2) are required to operate the equipment.

ii) Part-time (Volunteer)

The part-time staff should be reorganized to provide sufficient officers and personnel in relation to the apparatus operated at the individual fire halls. Fire Halls Nos. 1 and 2 should have a minimum of thirty (30)

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personnel (including a District Chief, three (3) Captains and three (3) Lieutenants). Fire Halls Nos. 3, 4 and 5 should have a minimum of twenty (20) personnel (including a District Chief, two (2) Captains and two (2) Lieutenants).

In order not to over-tax the number of responses made by part-time firefighters (especially in Fire Hall Nos. 1 and 2), consideration should be given to forming the firefighters, in each of Fire Halls Nos. 1 and 2, into squads of ten (10). Each squad would take its turn in rotation when responding to an emergency medical call and minor calls not requiring a large number of firefighters. This organization should be especially used at night time when a large number of part-time firefighters are available to respond and it is unnecessary to turn out all available firefighters at the fire hall to an incident requiring only three to five personnel.

FIRE HALLS

Fire Hall No. 1 (Headquarters)

The Headquarters Fire Hall is not well located to respond to its area of the City and is too small to accommodate the personnel and apparatus assigned to it. It should be relocated westerly (out of the downtown) to the area of Collier Street and Confederation Avenue. There is, at present, sufficient land available in the area and this location provides an excellent response pattern north of via Collier, east via Hwy. 58 (cross the canal) or Richmond (to downtown) and south via Beaverdams Road and Hwy. 406. The relocation of the fire hall would be even more critical should the Pine Street interchange with Hwy. 58 be closed.

The new fire hall should be at least three (3) bays by two (2) deep in size and of similar construction and design to Fire Hall No. 2. In addition, sufficient office space should be provided for the Department's headquarters staff and quarters for the on-duty personnel.

Fire Hall No. 2 (Thorold South)

This is a new facility and is adequate to meet the needs of the Fire Department. Its location provides a good response to its own area, as well as back-up to Fire Hall No. 3, and a fast response by Hwy. 58 into the downtown area.

Fire Hall No. 3 (Port Robinson "East")

This fire hall is generally adequate to meet the needs of the Fire Department and provides an essential first response to the east half of the community of Port Robinson and the south-east area of the City.

Fire Hall No. 4 (St. Johns)

This fire hall is adequate to meet the needs of the Fire Department. However, it is not well located being too close to the boundary of the Town of Pelham. Future consideration should be given to relocating it to the area of the Merrittville Highway and Holland Road.

Fire Hall No. 5 (Port Robinson "West")

This fire hall has been improved over the last few years but it still is not in keeping with a modern fire hall. With finances permitting, consideration should be given to its relocation to the area of Port Robinson Road and Kottmuer Road. This will provide a good response to the western portion of Port Robinson and the new industrial park presently planned south of Port Robinson Road, as well as to the south-east area of the City.

The relocated fire hall should be of non-combustible construction, two (2) bays wide by two (2) deep in size with office space, washroom/locker space, a classroom, meeting room and a hose drying facility. It should be located on a lot large enough to provide both parking for the part-time firefighters and a training area.

Presently there is a possibility that the Port Robinson Road/Hwy. 406 intersection may be closed. This intersection must remain open to allow a proper response to the south-west area of the City for Fire Hall No. 5, as well as response of part-time firefighters to the fire hall.

APPARATUS

Fire Hall No. 1

The telesquirt presently in service (Aerial no. 1) is presently scheduled for a much needed refurbishing after which should serve the City for several years.

Pumper No. 1 (1985) also requires refurbishing as soon as possible. As this unit is the busiest pumper in the City, it is recommended that a new pumper be acquired for this fire

hall with a five (5) person crew cab, a pump of 5000 Litres per minute (1050 Imp. gpm) capacity and a water tank of at least 3600 litres (800 Imp. gal.) in size. The present Pumper No. 1 should then be relocated to Fire Hall No. 4 to replace the 1972 unit.

Fire Hall No. 2

The apparatus at this fire hall is the newest in the Fire Department and no major replacement or major work is required in the near future.

Fire Hall No. 3

Both the pumper and tanker truck at this fire hall are overage and require replacement. It is recommended that these two (2) vehicles be replaced by a pumper-tanker truck unit with a five (5) person crew cab, a pump of 5000 litres per minute (1050 Imp. gpm) capacity and a water tank of 5500 litres (1200 Imp. gal.) capacity. The 1975 equipment should also be replaced as soon as finances allow.

Fire Hall No. 4

Both the pumper (1972) and the tanker truck (1973), as well as the equipment vehicle (1974), are overage and require replacement with modern apparatus. The pumper should be replaced by the present Pumper No. 1 (see under "Fire Hall No. 1") and the tanker truck should be replaced by one of modern design with a water tank of at least 6,800 litres (1,500 Imp. gal.) capacity.

The mini-pumper (No. 4A), should be relocated from this fire hall to Fire Hall No. 1 for use by the on-duty personnel. The mini-pumper is a much more manoeuvrable, economical and efficient vehicle for the two (2) on-duty personnel and provides sufficient water pumping and water tank capacities for their capabilities. On the rare occasion when there are three (3) personnel on-duty they could staff Pumper No. 1 as a pumper company. This will make Pumper No. 1 available for use, the majority of the time, by the part-time personnel.

Fire Hall No. 5

Both the pumper (1975) and the tanker truck (1973) at this fire hall, are overage and not of modern design. It is recommended that they be replaced by a pumper/tanker truck unit identical to the one proposed for Fire Hall No. 3. In addition, a personnel/equipment unit should be provided at this location.

Note 1 Please note that with the recommended reduction in the apparatus at Fire Halls Nos. 3 and 5 they will still require as minimum part-time complement of fifteen (15) active firefighters (including a District Chief, two (2) Captains and two (2) Lieutenants).

Note 2 Should Fire Hall No. 1 (Thorold) and Fire Hall No. 5 (Port Robinson "West") be relocated to the recommended areas, the area of the City presently covered by Fire Hall No. 4 would be within the recommended 8 kilometres (5 miles) response distance of these Halls. The City may be able to close this fire hall and still provide protection to this area.

Should the City decide to close Fire Hall No. 4, the 1985 pumper (Ex No. 1) should be relocated to Fire Hall No. 5 as a second pumping unit. In addition, a modern tanker truck should be provided to Fire Hall No. 1 as it will now be responding to a rural area.