TAMPA FIRE RESCUE
OPERATIONS DIVISION
AUDIT 23-02
FEBRUARY 7, 2023

City of Tampa
Jane Castor, Mayor

Internal Audit Department
315 E. Kennedy Boulevard
Tampa, Florida 33602
Office (813) 274-7159

February 7, 2023

Honorable Jane Castor
Mayor, City of Tampa
1 City Hall Plaza
Tampa, Florida

RE: Tampa Fire Department (TFR) – Operations, Audit 23-02

Dear Mayor Castor:

Attached is the Internal Audit Department's report on TFR Operations.

We thank the management and staff of TFR Operations for their cooperation and assistance during this audit.

Sincerely,

/s/ Christine Glover

Christine Glover
Internal Audit Director

cc: John Bennett, Chief of Staff
Barbara Tripp, Fire Chief
Dennis Rogero, Chief Financial Officer
Todd Alt, Assistant Chief of Operations
Carl Brody, Assistant City Attorney

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/s/ Matt Talbot

Senior Auditor

/s/ Vivian N Walker

Lead Senior Auditor

/s/ Christine Glover

Audit Director

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BACKGROUND

The Tampa Fire Rescue Department (TFR)'s Operations Division provides essential fire suppression and special operations services under the administration of the Assistant Chief of Operations. Geographic response areas are broken down into five different districts that operate 23 total fire stations (excluding the station at Tampa International Airport). Resources include 23 engine companies, 6 truck companies, and 20 rescue transport units. Incident response types include vehicle fires, wildland fires, trash/rubbish fires, residential/commercial structure fires, and ship fires. Resource concentration decisions are based on service demands, ongoing community risk assessments, apparatus utilization analysis, performance monitoring, and industry benchmarks.

There are several governing bodies that regulate fire service. Fire rescue industry codes and standards are established by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) which are intended to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and other associated risks. The National Fire Incident Reporting System is a required reporting standard that promotes uniform reporting for fire emergencies and other natural disasters. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) provides fire rating scores once every five years to fire departments and insurance companies. ISO scores reflect community preparedness and impact homeowner insurability. The Fair Labor Standards Act and Union contractual agreements govern firefighter work hours, overtime, and other specifics of compensation.

TFR responds to thousands of emergency calls every year, although the majority of calls are medical in nature. For example, in 2020 around 11% of emergency calls were fire calls. A total of 178 working fires occurred during that year. A working fire is defined as a fire that needs an external source of water.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

This audit was conducted in accordance with the Internal Audit Department's FY 2023 Audit Agenda. The objectives of this audit were to ensure that:

1. The system of internal controls related to TFR Operations is adequate.

2. Performance metrics are accurate, verifiable, and relevant.

3. Fire apparatus vehicle inspection checklists are completed timely.

4. TFR complies with its overtime policy that restricts consecutive work hours for firefighters to 64.

5. Overtime is paid for hourly shift overages worked due to late calls.

STATEMENT OF SCOPE

The audit period covered January 2021 to July 2022. Tests were performed to determine whether TFR personnel were fulfilling their stated duties and responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner. Original records as well as copies were used as evidence and verified through observation and physical examination.

STATEMENT OF METHODOLOGY

1. Interviewed management to determine the establishment of internal controls.

2. Surveyed comparable sized jurisdictions for similar performance metrics used.

3. Conducted a site visit to observe daily shift staffing meeting and other daily practices of TFR personnel.

4. Reviewed inspection checklists and other supporting vehicle maintenance records.

5. Reviewed payroll reports, staffing schedules, and Human Resources records related to overtime payments.

Sample testing was based on the criteria of 90% confidence level and 10% error rate. Where appropriate, judgmental sampling was used to improve the overall efficiency of the audit.

STATEMENT OF AUDITING STANDARDS

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

AUDIT CONCLUSIONS

Based upon the test work performed and the audit findings noted below, we conclude that:

1. The system of internal controls related to TFR Operations is adequate.

2. While management does report metrics, the reported metrics are not indicative of performance. However, a relevant performance metric was identified that should be reported.

3. Fire apparatus vehicle inspection checklists are completed timely.

4. TFR complies with its overtime policy that restricts consecutive work hours for firefighters to 64.

5. Overtime is paid for hourly shift overages worked due to late calls.

PERFORMANCE METRICS

STATEMENT OF CONDITION: Annually, Tampa Fire Rescue (TFR) submits a compliance report documenting response times to the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). The information submitted is based on data generated from Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) software. However, the current CAD software is outdated and has known accuracy issues. Additionally, one component when determining response times is travel time. Currently, the responding unit must "manually" notify TFR Communications when they arrive on scene because there is no Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) system being used. As a result, travel time can be inaccurate if there is no immediate communication by the responding unit.

CRITERIA: CFAI establishes industry standards for fire response time objectives for low, moderate, and high-risk fire suppression. The goal is based on the response 90% of the time.

CAUSE: According to management, the CAD/AVL system used in generating fire call response time data is outdated, causing potential accuracy issues.

EFFECT OF CONDITION: Lack of reliable data to assist in operational decision making.

RECOMMENDATION: Since there are known data issues with CAD, until a new CAD/AVL system can be implemented, TFR Management should consider developing alternate methods that will provide accurate data to measure performance. Once an alternative method has been developed, consideration should be given to regularly reporting results for relevant performance metrics.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE: I agree with this audit. The mission and goal of Tampa Fire Rescue is to protect our community by providing immediate responses to all request for service. An alternative method to measure the accuracy of TFR performance metrics will include working with TFR Communication Division and T&I to monitor prolong response time (including dispatch times, enroute, on-scene and availability of units). Information will be forwarded to TFR administration for review and improvement (as needed) to the field crews as well as changes to policies and/or procedures. Tampa Fire Rescue is currently in the process of obtaining a vendor for a new CAD and AVL system. A new CAD/AVL system will be instrumental regarding improving dispatch times, response times, and data collection. Once a new system is in place Tampa Fire Rescue will be able to fulfill the recommendation with accurate data.

TARGET IMPLEMENTATION DATE: December 2024