# ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULES
# FOR CHIEF OFFICERS
# AT
# THE CITY OF TWO RIVERS FIRE DEPARTMENT

**EXECTUTIVE LEADERSHIP**

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## ABSTRACT

Operations have changed significantly for the City of Two Rivers Fire Department. The problem is that the administrative responsibilities to manage these operations have changed dramatically. In operating under the California Plan of 24 hour shifts for assistant chiefs, the department has been experiencing communications and coordination problems.

The purpose of this paper was to analyze the feasibility of instituting alternative work schedules for the three assistant chiefs to manage more effectively these duties. An evaluative research procedure was conducted. The following research questions were answered.

1. What historical data is relevant to the issue of alternative work schedules for assistant chiefs at the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?
2. What conditions exist that warrant a change in duty hours for the assistant chiefs' positions?
3. What perceptions exist by assistant chiefs on the effectiveness of the work schedules currently utilized for assistant chiefs in the City of Two Rivers?
4. What perceptions exit by assistant chiefs on utilizing an alternate work schedule for their positions in the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?
5. What perceptions exist by lieutenants on the effectiveness of the work schedules currently utilized for assistant chiefs in the City of Two Rivers.
6. What perceptions exist by the current lieutenants on utilizing an alternate work schedule for assistant chiefs at the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?
7. What relevant issues exist in other departments concerning the implementation of alternative work schedules for assistant chiefs?

The procedures required a review of the literature. Also the officer staff was surveyed. The findings indicated that it was feasible to alter the work schedule for the assistant chiefs. It was inconclusive of whether the alternate work schedule used for illustration would ever be appropriate for the department. However, some type of alteration to address needs is recommended based upon the following: organizational participatory input, stressing the importance of health and safety, building upon the positive aspects of the departments x day concept, and constant evaluation of anything initiated.

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# INTRODUCTION

The City of Two Rivers Fire Department has continued to evolve in many ways to keep pace with a rapidly changing environment. Many new programs have been added to the department's repertoire both on a voluntary and mandatory basis. The department has continually modified the ways in which all of the responsibilities have been managed in ordered to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of their delivery. This has been accomplished with a personnel compliment that, except for the fire chief, has been working 24-hour shifts. This includes the three assistant chiefs.

The problem is that the administrative duties of the City of Two Rivers Fire Department have changed dramatically in recent years. As a result of these changes, the department continues to experience communication and coordination deficiencies in managing the major divisions in its charge. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the feasibility of instituting alternative work schedules for the three assistant chiefs in order for the department to, more efficiently and with greater conformity, manage all areas of operations.

An evaluative research procedure was used to explore this problem. The researcher reviewed literature from the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) Learning Resource Center and the Two Rivers Fire Department's library. In addition, the officers of the department were surveyed. The following research questions were answered:

1. What historical data is relevant to the issue of alternative work schedules for assistant chiefs at the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?
2. What conditions exist that warrant a change in duty hours for the assistant chiefs' positions?

3. What perceptions exist by assistant chiefs on the effectiveness of the work schedules currently utilized for assistant chiefs in the City of Two Rivers?
4. What perceptions exit by assistant chiefs on utilizing an alternate work schedule for their positions in the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?
5. What perceptions exist by lieutenants on the effectiveness of the work schedules currently utilized for assistant chiefs in the City of Two Rivers.
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## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFIGANCE

### Historical Background

The City of Two Rivers Fire Department consists of a chief, 3 assistants chiefs, 3 lieutenants, 12 full time fire fighters, 15 paid on call fire fighters and a part time administrative assistant operating out of one fire station. The department serves a 6 square mile, highly industrialized community of approximately 13,000 residents. In 1998 it responded to 871 emergency calls. The call volume has been increasing at an average of 5% over the last five years.

The chief works a 40-hour week. The full time personnel are divided into three shifts, each work 24-hour days on the California Plan. The 15 paid on call are divided into two shifts. The full time personnel voluntarily carry radios with page capabilities. The paid on call carry

pagers. Minimum manning for the department is four full time personnel. Significant use of off duty personnel is utilized for recall. Full time personnel are paged to the station to cover shortages created by emergency responses. The paid on call respond directly to the scene in most cases. The full time fire fighters and lieutenants are members of the International Association of Fire Fighters and Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin. The chief, assistant chiefs and paid on call fire fighters are not affiliated with any union.

The department has evolved throughout the years. It was originally formed as a volunteer department. In the early 1920s it was organized as a full time department. At that time it was staffed only by one shift with members alternating time off. In the late 1930s it changed to have 2 platoons each working every other day. It was at this time that the department acquired a fire chief that basically worked days only. During these periods the only duty of the department was fire suppression. In 1932 when the existing fire station was built the call volume of the department was 77.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the department did have another person on days to handle two emerging fields that came to the forefront, training and fire inspections. This person worked a day shift to accomplish these two tasks. In the 1960s the department was reorganized into three platoons. At this time the training/inspections officer was placed on shift to bring the compliment to 21 fire fighters, seven per shift, and the chief. This was the highest compliment of full time personnel ever established by the city for the department. At approximately this time also the department was given the responsibility of emergency medical responses for the community. They began as first responders with very little training.

The next significant change came in the early 1980s. The department was reduced three personnel, one per shift, when the automatic alarms that were monitored in the fire station were

removed to the city's dispatch center. A short time later a paid on call force was implemented to meet shortcomings in the fire suppression forces. The full time compliment worked the California Plan as they do today. The paid on call respond with their gear to the scene after receiving a page. They are only used as a supplement to the full time and are not trained for any duties in emergency medicine.

The complexity of duties and responsibilities has changed significantly since the department was first organized. As stated earlier emergency medicine was added to the duties of the department in the early 1960s. The department has made a steady progression of the level of care provided. Some of the first emergency medical technician classes in the State of Wisconsin in the early 1960s had Two Rivers' personnel in attendance. When intermediate and defibrillation skills were approved by the state, the department upgraded. Recently, the department initiated the highest level of prehospital care, paramedic.

The department has a very proactive fire prevention and education program. Fire inspections have become an intricate part of operations. Education has also played a significant part of the services provided. The department has an extensive prevention/education effort that targets all age groups of the community from preschool to seniors. This includes not only fire prevention by also accident prevention. In addition there is an extensive effort by the department to teach cardiopulmonary resuscitation thorough the American Heart Association (AHA). Recently, to enhance these efforts, the department applied for and received the designation as a certified training center by the AHA.

Besides being involved in the areas mentioned previously, the department has assumed many others in recent history. Hazardous materials response and mitigation is a recent development. Both full and part time personnel participate as members of the county's

hazardous materials team. Certain equipment is located in the Two Rivers Fire Department to act as the primary responding contingent in the northern part of the county. The department also has assumed the role of first responder in any possible cold water rescues in its jurisdiction.

In order to effectively manage the evolving duties and responsibilities the department has changed its administrative structure in recent years. The first change came when the duties of the department were assessed and divided among the six officers serving the department. In the late 1980s the chief at that time commissioned the training officer to set up a consensus building process for the officer staff. This process looked at what the department was doing and who in the officer staff had the expertise to manage it. Assignments were made from this process. What resulted was a flatting of the organizational structure (Appendix A). The current chief modified this structure at the beginning of 1995 (APPENDIX B). While these charts have been used to address the administrative functions of the department, there is also a separate chart for line functions (Appendix C).

The above have existed to address the unique needs of the operations at the Two Rivers Fire Department. It was recognized from the beginning of the process that people of less rank would have authority reporting to the chief on their areas of responsibility. While at times this created some confusion in communications and authority issues, there has been very little conflict.

**Scheduling Initiatives**

The department in last four years has also experimented with two concepts in alternative scheduling for its assistant chiefs. The first was a flex schedule. This divided one 24-hour day into three eight-hour days. The purpose was to create a block of time when they could be together for three straight days in October to develop and organize the department's next

calendar year. The assistant chiefs recommended this to the chief. This directly affected the ability of taking vacation days by the lieutenants and fire fighters (all union positions). However, it did not meet with any resistance and has been utilized successfully as a planning tool.

The second concept was called x days. In order to more effectively manage, the assistant chiefs divided one 24-hour shift into two nine-hour days each month. These days are scheduled after all shift members had the opportunity to pick for days off at the approval of the lieutenant. Then, the x days are used by the assistant chiefs as two days in which they are relieved of their day to day line and shift responsibilities. During these days they work on projects and duties directly related to the administration of the department. In order to implement this, the chief agreed that the six hours would be dropped as compensation for the change. This was agreed to by the city manager. It did not meet with much resistance. It also has been used to great benefit.

The chief of the department for the past three years has been under an imposed zero percent increase in the operational budget (other than wage increases for union personnel) by the city manager. However, he has been allowed to present to the city council, at the time of budget reviews, items that represent the true needs of the department. In the last four budgets the chief has presented an additional person request to the council. The purpose of this person was to be utilized in some fashion for routine emergency responses and other duties in some type of schedule that would allow more flexibility for the administrative duties for assistant chiefs. Each year this position has been cut. However, there has been some city manager and council recognition that there is a true need. Additionally, it is important to add that the previous chief of the department had tried unsuccessfully to budget for another chief officer on a 40hour schedule during his tenure.

**Significance**

Fire department operations have evolved significantly over the years. These changes have occurred due to increased government regulations as well as a continued escalation of community expectations. While this evolution has occurred in the duties performed, the department is still primarily utilizing work schedules that are structured to accommodate a paramilitary, reactionary organization. While there has been some changes in the structural make up of the department, the availability of chief officers to provide continuity in the provisions of administration of the department is severely hampered. Their schedule makes them fundamentally unavailable during what is perceived as normal business hours by the public most of the time. Without this availability, communications and customer service suffer greatly.

Meeting the demands of today's fire service is extremely challenging with chief officers working a California Plan schedule. The plan by definition makes them available approximately one third of the time. Out of that amount on the 24-hour shift some of that time is weekends and holidays. This is another factor that limits their availability to carry out the administration of the department.

Other problems are also associated with specific shift assignment. Coordinating and supervising day to day shift responsibilities compete and at times interfere with the accomplishment of their overall department administrative responsibilities. In utilizing their duty day they are involved with minor, day to day shift projects and issues that monopolizes their time. Rather than occupy their limited time with areas of administration for the organization as a whole, as shift commanders they are assigning jobs and overseeing the completion of tasks such as routine maintenance and day to day inspection assignments.

**Relevance to Executive Fire Officer Course**

This research project is relevant to the Managing Change Unit (11) of the National Fire Academy's Executive Leadership Course. Operations have changed significantly for the City of Two Rivers Fire Department. Successfully managing in today's environment requires constant evaluation of structure and scheduling. For any substantial change to take place in scheduling for chief officers, a cooperative effort will be required that looks systematically at all the issues.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Activity schedules for any business including a fire department must be organized around the work that they do. This ultimately is structured with consideration given to the size and the scope of the business and its operations. As the complexity of the work changes, so does the coordination needs change (Cote, 1997). The organization must operate in such a way as to accomplish tasks in the most effective and efficient manner. The people should be positioned strategically to ensure the accomplishment of all duties within the business.

The complicating factor to providing a plan to carrying out the activities of any organization comes from the nature of the organization itself. In specifically looking at the fire service, most are set up around the functions or divisions of the department (Snook, 1988). These specific areas are managed within the context of a paramilitary structure and work system. Ranks are created to establish a set order to an otherwise chaotic, out of control fire ground. The whole focus is to manage an emergency operation through power and control (Hewitt, 1995). In addressing the needs on the scene of an emergency this type of system has been proven to work

very well. Rank and structure function to serve a timely response to the traditional reactive calls for help in times of emergency for a given jurisdiction.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA, 1994), a well known national standards making agency, discusses the organization of the fire department in its Standard 1201. It states that primarily departments are organized around the mitigation of emergencies. It goes on to add that, "Traditional practice as followed in the United States and Canada establishes the fire company as the basic unit of a fire department" (NFPA 1201, p. 25). This unit is the basic work unit for a response to an emergency.

NFPA goes on however, to mention that an organization is based upon the scope of its operations. Further, there is a whole list of managerial functions that cut across all lines of the organization. These include, "…financial management, personnel management, fire protection engineering, fire prevention, code enforcement, fire safety education, fire investigation, research and planning, maintenance, training, community relations, communications, safety and health, and other activities" (NFPA 1201, p. 27). All of the activities mentioned here are not necessarily unique to any one company. In recent years they lay outside the normal reactive organization but rather call for a whole new involvement for today's fire service. As the complexity of the world around the fire service has become so does the complexity of managing.

The realities of today's work environment make constant change and innovation inevitable for any organization to be successful. In Alvin Toffler's, *The Adaptive Corporation*, it is stated that the ability to change is necessary for survival is today's environment. Mr. Toffler emphasizes that the structure of any business needs to reflect the environment it serves (Toffler, 1985). The fire service has changed dramatically with the increases in customer demands.

Many of the managerial functions identified in NFPA 1201 are illustrations of the new ways of doing business. In many cases structures and work schedules, however, have stayed the same.

David Osborne and Ted Gaebler in their book *Reinventing Government* state that there was a time not long ago when information flowed at a much more leisurely pace. Today that is not the case. We live in an environment when things change very quickly (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Work systems and strategies need to be structured to handle this evolving environment.

Fire departments have had to do things that have been outside the way they usually did business. Some of these changes have been imposed from the communities they serve. One example of this can be illustrated with what has occurred in the Orange County Florida Fire Department. In 1996 they saw a total shake up of their entire way of doing business. Mike Iacona, then the newly appointed fire chief who took office after the reorganization, stated that he was mandated to deal with the department from more of a business standpoint. The new emphasis will be on proactive endeavors in education and injury prevention for the public. He stated that the fire stations need to look more like office environments rather than home environments (Delroy, 1986). This is very different from the traditional concept that fire stations were there as a place to house the reactive forces until they were needed.

The home environments were thought necessary due to the 24-hour shift schedules. This staffed fire stations in an economical manner for a lot of communities. The reactive mode of the fire service did require and still does require responders to be located centrally to answer the call in case of an emergency. This day to day orientation, in many instances, does not take into account the need to carry out operations on a systematic basis (Shearer, 1989). In dealing with the systems of the fire department, the focus is on training, fire prevention and inspection

activities for the whole of the department. This is the business of fire services today. This supports the reactive role while enriching the proactivity of community services.

The fire service has made efforts to address its systematic needs by addressing the work schedules of the management staff. This has generally been targeted at the level in the organization below the fire chief and above union membership levels. One such example can be found in Madison, Wisconsin. Responding to fiscal restraints the department developed an alternative work schedule for its chief officers. The schedule called for coverage by the chief officers for all calls that required multi-unit responses. It also provided time on a day to day basis for these officers to carry on the business of the department.

The Edmonton, Alberta Emergency Response Department also endeavored to institute systematic changes for its management staff, even though most of the changes that had been implemented have been reversed. The department restructured and made its management staff true team members rather than just mail carriers. This large, metropolitan department developed a system in which the battalion chiefs were involved as members of the management team running day to day operations. The assistant chiefs were placed on 40-hour weeks. The department developed a team that dealt with daily operations as well as systematically addressing department wide issues. The chief welcomed this team concept in dealing with issues that he once dealt with alone. Also he could focus more attention representing the department and being an intricate part of the city's management team. While, from a management viewpoint, things were pointed in the right direction, the rank and file, especially the union membership, did not see it that way. After a study was completed that focused on the lack of working relationships between management and labor and the fire chief left, most of the above changes were overturned (Williams, 1997).

Redundo Beach California represents another city that had to undergo some major shifts in how they did business. The prompting factor was financial cutbacks. The fire department of that community underwent a reduction in personnel accomplished through attrition. Management duties were reassigned to incorporate a plan that had the chief officers assigned to a 40-hour week with responsibility of emergency responses to multi-alarm incidents on a rotating basis on weekends and nights. The plan was initiated with considerations given to the union viewpoints as well as a commitment from city officials. The advantages as cited by Fire Chief Richard Bridges include:

> Three separate shifts are now perceived as one fire suppression system when decisions are made. No longer do BCs perceive shifts as mine or yours. The entire senior staff is on duty from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday. On Mondays and Friday, two of the four chiefs on duty manage their divisions from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Timely and increased communications between chiefs and speedy resolution of problems is becoming a reality. There are fewer delays when the key players are at work four days a week. Inconsistencies between shifts resulting from BC's personal preferences are minimized. There are increased opportunities for BCs to become involved in city task forces, working on issues that cross department boundaries. Improved follow-through on assignments ensures completion of work by target dates. Pay for sleep has been eliminated, and availability during normal business hours increased. Now there is more opportunity for increased authority and responsibility by company officers. (Bridges, 1993, p. 24)

While it may seem initially that the Redondo Beach solution addresses all the needs of the department it did not meet with universal acceptance. In a rebuttal article, Retired Fire Chief Jack Bennet cautions those who think this is the remedy for everything. Specifically he cites that by taking this position out of the initial response of fire personnel to an emergency, there is an increased burden placed on these initial responders to not only handle attack but also strategy. In effect there could very well be a reduction in the numbers for that original response which has been proven to increase injuries to fire fighters (Bennet, 1993). Chief Bennet's contention is the reactive function could suffer considerably.

Many of the change initiatives cited in this review were not coming from the people who would be directly affected by revisions in their duties and schedules. Their agendas to some extent were different. One example comes from the Murray City Fire Department. A study was completed in 1998 that looked at alternate schedules. The purpose was to address the perceived needs of the chief officers within the context of their department's changing environment. Their management staff was working approximately ten days per month on a 24-hour schedule. Input was solicited on the issue of change. When responses were evaluated, it was evident that these chief officers, for the most part, were more concerned about their personal schedules then they were about the department's agendas (Camp, 1998).

Many of the same problems involved with Murray City were also identified in a study completed by Assistant Chief John Cratty of the Galesburg Fire Department, Galesburg, IL. Chief Cratty states that it is difficult for the chief officers of his department as managers of department functions when the majority of them lack contact with the members of the department two thirds of the time (Cratty, 1994). These chief officers as in other cases referenced in this review work a 24-hour shift. This is another instance of addressing the

reactive portions of their job. It does not provide an effective schedule for carrying out the management of the entire department.

Chief Ronald Moore of the St. Charles, Missouri Fire Department studied the possibilities of reassignment and alternate scheduling for his chief officers. He found that the people in those positions generally liked the 24-hour shifts. From this Chief Moore surmised that it is difficult to change one's work schedule when that is what they want to be doing. There would be no buy in or acceptance. The study reiterated that for any change to be effective the individuals need to be a part of that change (Moore, 1995). The goal would be to develop ownership and perceived organizational betterment.

## PROCEDURES

The research procedures utilized in this report included a literature review, a survey of the assistant chiefs (Appendix D) and lieutenants (Appendix E) of the department. The review of the literature included two primary sources. First, information was received from the National Emergency Training Center (NETC). Second, the library of the City of Two Rivers Fire Department was consulted.

The survey was conducted of the officer staff to get relevant information pertinent to start the process of analyzing the issues related to any change in work schedules. Since the current chief has been the administrator of the department the staff has been addressed as all the officers in the department. Issues such as the reorganization of administrative duties have been dealt with in a consensus format with all participating.

The researcher determined that for this issue it would be important to gain a framework of the concepts involved by first soliciting input from the officers. The assistant chiefs would be

most changed if their work schedules were altered. The lieutenants would be next most affected. In the promotional procedure the past practice of the department has been that the lieutenants were the only candidates qualified to apply for the assistant chiefs' positions.

The researcher sat down with each officer to discuss the survey instrument. In addition to the six officers, input was solicited from the next person on the list for promotion to lieutenant. The idea that the instrument was a starting point was stressed to everyone. The purpose was to begin the dialogue and get the issues to the forefront. As explained to each person, the questions on the survey were written to address several specific areas.

First, the questionnaire asked the officers to evaluate the traditional work schedule and x day concept. It was stressed that explanations were expected in the comment section and on additional paper if needed. The next part dealt specifically with a sample of an alternate work schedule constructed by the researcher. For the purpose of this project each person was asked to assume certain things as outlined in the survey tool. Again it was emphasized that the purpose was to solicit ideas and related concepts to begin the process. All officers were then asked to list both the benefits and detriments from their perspectives. In addition they were also asked to rank each in their order of importance. The lieutenants had one additional question that addressed whether or not the initiation of an alternative schedule would affect their decision on applying and testing for an assistant chief's position.

**Project Limitations**

Two limitations can be cited for this project. Departments in the literature review generally reflected fire departments of greater size than that of the Two Rivers Fire Department. This could make any direct comparisons unconvincing. Secondly, the department's officer staff has not had a great deal of exposure to alternate work schedules similar to the one used for

illustration in this review. On one hand this may be not prejudice their answers by other experiences. However, without any knowledge base it may have been difficult to fully understand a system such as this.

**Definition of Terms**

| | |
|---|---|
| Assistant Chief (AC) | The person typically identified as second or third in command of a fire department. |
| Battalion Chief (BC) | The position typically identified as being in command of more than one company in a fire department. |
| California Plan | A work schedule for organizations that provide coverage for 24 hour shifts. The typical schedule is as follows: 24 on, 24 off, 24 on, 24 off, 24 on, 96 off. |
| Deputy Chief | The person typically identified as the second or third in command of the fire department. |
| Paramilitary | This term refers to a civilian group organized on military lines. |
| Proactive | This term refers to action taken in anticipation to an event. The effort is to minimize or mitigate an anticipated event. |
| Reactive | This term refers to responding or reacting to something. An event happens and there is a response to it. |

# RESULTS

The results of this research project were derived from the following areas: the 'Background and Significance' section of this paper, the review of the literature, and the surveys conducted of the two target groups.

## Research Question 1

**What historical data is relevant to the issue of alternative work schedules for assistant chiefs at the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?**

Historically, the department's assistant chiefs have always, for the most part, worked a traditional work schedule. The 24 hour shift has been the standard that the entire officer staff has seen both before they were promoted and through their tenure as officers. Not only professionally but also personally their lives have evolved around this schedule.

Also important is that the department has been trying to address the new obligations of managing operations. The duty assignments and areas of authority have changed in recent years. The work schedules have not other than the two concepts, flex days and x days. X days were instituted to achieve many of the objectives of the alternate work schedule illustrated in this research project. The x days were instituted with mostly favorable reviews from many in the department especially the officer staff.

## Research Question 2

**What conditions exist that warrant a change in duty hours for the assistant chiefs' positions?**

The department has experienced a tremendous amount of change. In 1932 the department's only business was fire suppression. Today the complexities and responsibilities include a full paramedic emergency medical service, an extensive program of proactive community education initiatives, and hazardous materials as well as fire suppression. All of this has placed managerial burdens on the department. Issues of continuity and communications have challenged the abilities of the organization to meet the increased demands of the customers as well as the regulations imposed by governmental agencies.

**Research Question 3**

**What perceptions exist by assistant chiefs on the effectiveness of the work schedules currently utilized for assistant chiefs in the City of Two Rivers?**

The California plan received an overall rating of 2.8. This placed it on the high end of the ineffective range and/or low end of the effective range. Each category was rated very close to effective or the mid range of the rating scale. Coordination of administrative duties, enhancement of coordination with other city departments, and enhancement of communications with agencies other than city departments scored the lowest of all the categories averaging 2.3. The highest rating, 3.7, went to the category relating to emergency responses. The following is a summary of the comments written in reference to this question.

- I believe we operate efficiently under the current plan because of constant striving to overcome problems.
- I believe more answers fit into the inefficient category
- The schedule leaves long stretches without contact with officers and shifts.
- Assigned shift commanders are effective.

- Emergency response is very effective because of the ability to know each other. The 24-hour shift is an advantage here.
- Sometimes it's difficult to connect with incoming/outgoing shifts.
- It's difficult (administration duties) to connect with fire fighters from other shifts. E-mail has been helpful but fire fighters are slow to respond.
- Coordination between fire fighters and officers is difficult at times.
- Emergency runs interrupt administrative duties.
- Often phone tag is played with other agencies limiting continuity.

The responses to the x day questions averaged 3.3. This placed them in the effective range. For each category under this question, the scores were in the '3' ranges. The highest average scores of 3.7 were recorded in the enhancement of communications with the fire chief, fellow officers and agencies other than city departments. The following is a summary of the comments written in reference to this question.

- X days are OK when administrative duties are needed because on regular days much of the time is spent running the shift.
- It's harder on the lieutenant to be the in charge officer.
- X days are successful in dedicating time to the assistant chiefs.
- The intent of x days is effective, but one day has its limitations.
- It allows more customer contacts both internal and external.
- Coordination of administrative duties is more flexible.
- It offers more continuity in many areas.
- In emergency response on x days we are not counted to be there but are there to be counted on.

- One business day is not enough to fully allow the assistant chiefs to keep pace with today's demand on his time.

**Research Question 4**

**What perceptions exit by assistant chiefs on utilizing an alternate work schedule for their positions in the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?**

The responses evaluating the sample presented in the survey averaged 3.9. This was on the high side of effective and/or the low side of very effective. Most categories were scored as a 4. The lowest average, 3.3, was recorded in the availability to internal customers. The following is a summary of the comments written in reference to this question.

- City workers work 40 hours and get overtime after that.
- Vacation is based on hours worked. More than average.
- The acting classification-more responsibilities more dollars.
- The less daily line responsibilities and more administrative duties are a wash.
- In principle the alternate work schedule should allow more flexibility.
- Exposes to members of the department more officers.
- Should improve on x days.
- It appears to be the next progressive step.
- It is a natural progression
- All the minuses and pluses need to be considered.

When asked the benefits of utilizing a similar plan to the example presented in the survey, the following is a summary of the responses.

- More time for administrative duties.
- Increased productivity, continuity, and communications.

- A merit increase is a plus.
- There would be better normal business hour coverage.
- There would be an improvement of inside and outside communications.

When asked the detriments of utilizing a similar plan to the example presented in the survey, the following is a summary of the responses.

- It will affect ALL members of the department.
- Staffing levels will be affected (lowered).
- There will be union considerations (picking time off).
- Less line duties may widen the union/management gap.
- More responsibilities for the lieutenants could make this position less desirable.
- Who is the ranking officer when two assistant chiefs are here?
- No scheduled breaks longer than three days could lead to burn out.
- The assistant chiefs are almost doubling the amount of 8-hour days (85-156).
- When exceeding the 48 hours how will compensation occur?
- It will mean more costs to the city.
- It will cut into off duty activities now enjoyed by the current schedule.
- Will the merit increase offset current off duty job incomes?
- Every fire fighter does not have the training, experience or even want to be in charge (even though most are in that pay classification).
- Current fire fighters even now do not want the job.
- Will there be a lack of desire to attend meetings off duty?
- It could increase the gap between chief officers and the rest.

- Confidence levels on both sides could be affected with no shift assignment for assistant chiefs (assistant chiefs fire fighters).
- The moral of assistant chiefs accustomed to the 24-hour shift may be a factor.
- People may not seek promotions.
- Too many chiefs on weekdays may create problems.

**Research Question 5**

**What perceptions exist by lieutenants on the effectiveness of the work schedules currently utilized for assistant chiefs in the City of Two Rivers.**

The California Plan received an overall average rating of 2.7. This placed it on the high end of ineffective and/or the lower levels of effective. All scores were below the mid range score of 3 except for one. This was in the area of enhancement of emergency operations. It received the highest average rating of 4. The following is a summary of the comments written in reference to this question.

- Twenty-four hours do not work effectively for administrative duties. It is especially critical when people call from outside the department.
- I see very few problems. We can not please every person in every situation.
- Day to day coordination takes up too much time.
- There are limitations to communications due to limited on duty time with limited availability to people.
- The California plan allows experienced assistant chiefs to add valued experiences to emergency ground situations.
- The plan causes delays because of the ineffective communications it creates.
- Effectiveness can be improved by increasing availability during normal business hours.

The responses to the x day questions received an overall average rating of 4.2. All categories were rated in the 4 range. This placed them in the high effective and/or lower very effective range. However, availability to external customers received the lowest average score of 3.7. The following is a summary of the comments written in reference to this question.

- X days help to a limited fashion.
- One 8-hour day is not enough. Just as things are started continuity is lost.
- It has enhanced the effectiveness of assistant chiefs in all areas.
- There is greater ability to coordinate administrative duties and improve communications.
- Great improvement is achieved when they don't have to perform shift/line responsibilities.
- They are also available for emergencies.
- It has improved department effectiveness.
- The interactions with department members have improved.
- It puts additional people in the station for help in many areas.

**Research Question 6**

**What perceptions exist by the current lieutenants on utilizing an alternate work schedule for assistant chiefs at the City of Two Rivers Fire Department?**

The responses evaluating the sample in the survey averaged 3.8. This places it on the high effective and/or the low very effective. Most scores were in the 4 range. Enhancement of emergency responses was the lowest at an average of 2.7. The questions dealing with the availability to internal customers, communications with fire fighters and other city departments received the rating of 3.7. The following is a summary of responses written in reference to this question.

- It does not allow a Friday night/Sunday off. This limits family time. Right now I get a four-day weekend once per month.
- I'm not sure of the intent of the schedule.
- I only see an advantage of them here one extra day per week.
- We can't please everyone in every situation.
- What about the impact on the fire fighters and lieutenants?
- There is more time for administrative duties.
- It will improve communications.
- It reduces manpower in the evenings.
- It will improve communications and productivity.
- It will decrease the amount of time they need to be here off duty.
- How can vacations be taken?
- Will lieutenants and fire fighters be limited in their time off?
- I can not see lowering staffing levels and compromising emergency response.
- As a lieutenant I can't get time off now for holidays. This could make it worse.
- We can not go lower than 4 full time on an initial response.
- If we want others to step up we have to give them the background and experiences.
- Already today the assistant chiefs are limited in their line duties.
- Can we eliminate other duties to allow more time for administrative duties?
- When asked the benefits of utilizing a similar plan to the example presented in the survey, the following is a summary of the responses.
- It would enhance communications with external customers.
- It would enhance administrative planning.

- Business could be conducted on consecutive days
- It would provide cohesiveness and a stable work place.
- It would allow evening off for the family.
- Functionality and effectiveness could be improved.
- It would improve more normal business hour contact time.
- It would facilitate the accomplishment of duties.
- It allows for more interactions with department members.

When asked the detriments of utilizing a similar plan to the one presented in the survey the following is a summary of the responses.

- It will lower moral
- It could reduce the initial emergency response.
- There will be less time off for assistant chefs.
- There could be a reduction in the applicants for the position.
- There will be more responsibility and workload for the lieutenants and fire fighters.
- There is no chance for a 3-day weekend.
- How does the lieutenant get a decent vacation schedule or holiday off?
- Assistant chiefs need to be accountable for their time and not merely putting in their time.
- If not for all should some of them be put on a similar schedule?
- Could a change in position titles and responsibilities affect this?
- What about days off?
- How will emergencies be handled?
- What about union issues?
- It will decrease consistency of officers to assigned shifts.

- On call hours for assistant chiefs actually increases duties for them.

The last question asked the lieutenant respondents to determine whether or not this type of work plan would affect them is applying for this position. Two respondents reported it would be a detriment. One said that he was hired to work a 24-hour schedule and the other stated it was because of the time in his career. Another respondent stated it would have no effect at all but it would be difficult to say because many issues were still unresolved. However, he felt it definitely should be discussed. The last respondent stated that it may be an incentive but there were many issues to be resolved**.**

**Research Question 7**

**What relevant issues exist in other departments concerning the implementation of alternative work schedules for assistant chiefs?**

Most fire departments are organized around the traditional function of emergency responses. New realities of doing business in an evolving environment have caused some to pursue alternatives. In many instances the literature illustrates that it took some outside influence, such as shortcomings in budgetary areas, to promote a particular fire department to look for alternatives to doing business.

The literature did show that there was some interest in the fire service in altering the work schedules for its chief officers. There appeared to be both success stories as well as some reversals of attempts that were made to change what had be traditionally done in a department. One underlining fact in several cases was that chief officers already on the 24-hour shift liked that shift. Another was that if the people of the organization are not part of the process it has the potential to fail. Several cases cited in the literature did report substantial improvements in many

areas of administrating departments. One source, however, did offer a very stern caution. A change of this sort could result in severe consequences if it compromises the traditional response duties of any fire department.

## DISCUSSION

The organization of the City of Two Rivers Fire Department is staffed around the reactive portion of the duties. This is similar to all the examples cited in the literature and the way fire departments have traditionally done business. No matter how much of the efforts are put into proactive endeavors, there is still the need to react when the call is received of an emergency. This is what is expected and this is what should be delivered.

Two Rivers is experiencing the same realities as other communities. How does the administration of the department get done with the administrators basically working a schedule that has them on duty about 10 days per month? At some point in the evolution of the fire service this may have been adequate. This does not seem today, however, to address all the processes that are involved. In looking at the other departments cited in the literature, Two Rivers is not unique in this aspect. There are some that are also wrestling with these issues.

The conflict lies with the need to address both areas, proactive response and administrative imperatives. When looking at the unique characteristics of the department this is especially challenging. The department is small in numbers. There simply are not the people with which to strategize. Any changes in work scheduling with the current compliment of personnel can affect many areas of the operations. This is especially true of emergency responses. Any reduction in the initial response to emergencies could have serious ramifications

on their outcomes. This could be true for both the citizens in the community as well as the fire fighters and officers on the response.

Additionally, while there was support over the years for additional personnel, it does not appear that the political climate, as it exists now, will allow for any increases. After all the perception is the jobs of the department are being done. It appears that some extraordinary situation would need to occur for there to be any increases in staffing. It is difficult to develop solutions in an environment where verbally there is support for additions yet the money is not there. It is also very difficult to make moneys available in the existing budget when there has been a zero percent increase limitation imposed for several years.

The survey responses from the officers do not reflect a tremendous dissatisfaction with the California Plan. The researcher recognizes that this is what has been the standard for the department for all of the time the current officers have been employed. This, to some extent, accounts for the ratings it was given. All officers did report a general effectiveness response to the work schedule meeting the emergency response needs. Throughout the survey, concerns came through loud and clear for emergency response accountability. However, they did cite shortcomings to the California Plan. This illustrates there are needs to address. Communication and coordination issues were cited. These issues correlated with many cases in the literature review.

The successes recorded by other departments in their alternative scheduling are reflected in the responses to the x day concept the department initiated. This is seen in the surveys that were completed by not only the assistant chiefs but also the lieutenants. They allow the department managers to address issues that cut across all lines of the department. While not as

radical as an alternate work schedule, the officers responded that it has been effective. As illustrated in the responses the only real concern was that it was not enough.

The alternate work schedule presented in the survey was an attempt by the researcher to have the officer staff view the issue on a much greater scale, similar to some of the cases cited in the literature review. The purpose was to stimulate a dialogue to investigate the possibilities. It was not meant as the solution necessarily.

The favorable responses by both the assistant chiefs and lieutenants when they rated the alternate work schedule's possible effectiveness may illustrate recognition that there is truly validity to altering the schedule. The responses centered on the improvement in communications and coordination efforts for at least the administrative efforts of the assistant chiefs. This was encouraging. It could have been possible for the respondents to answer on personal concerns only as some of the cases referenced in the literature. Their responses indicated that they answered on the basis of organizational needs to a large extent. This is also very encouraging. With such a break in the traditional scheduling, the possibility did exist that the respondents could evaluate on personal issues rather than administrative.

With the more positive responses there was not many how, why or what in the responses. This was due in large part to the vagueness of its impact on operations. It was also due to the lack of additional information presented to the officers. Such considerations as how it would impact the responsibilities of the officer staff, other than the line duties would be minimized for the assistant chiefs, were not included. Again the researcher intended this to be starting point. As stated in the literature review in several cases, the people affected by any change need to be included in the change process. Any change process has to start somewhere. It was decided to start with the staff to at least explore the possibilities.

The officer staff responded much more specifically with their concerns and possible drawbacks of such an alternate schedule. As stated earlier, there were major concerns in the area of emergency response. Items were raised related to compensation. Union issues were also raised. There were some personal concerns expressed. They included time off issues and whether any additional compensation would offset what was being earned with off duty part time jobs. The researcher expected all of these in one fashion or another.

One area of particular significance raised had to do with the very thing a schedule such as the one presented could eliminate. It was recognized by many of the respondents that the ties that exist between the assistant chiefs on 24-hour schedule are a benefit to operations. They are part of the team on a day to day basis even though they are management positions. Would this type of schedule in effect widen the gap between union and management? Would confidence levels be diminished between the managers and the workers when they do not have the experience of working and living together? Any change that would in effect create more problems than it solved would certainly not be worth it.

The affects of this type of a schedule on the current assistant chiefs as well as the future people who would be eligible to test for the position are a serious concern. The survey echoed what was addressed in the literature review. People see the 24-hour shift as part of their lives. They grew up with this schedule and all portions of their lives revolve around it. As stated by the respondents any change could result in moral problems for the department by placing people in positions that they do not want to be. In looking at the lieutenants response on the last question, two out of the four at this point would not apply if an alternate work schedule similar to the one presented was instituted.

Alternative scheduling could improve operations at the City of Two Rivers Fire Department. There are, however, many issues that need resolution. There is recognition by the officers that the department has needs that require addressing. The literature does offer examples of achievements in other departments that have initiated alternatives. The question becomes one of whether the Two Rivers Fire Department will loose more than it will gain by any changes made to the scheduling of chief officers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this study, the researcher concludes that it is feasible to alter the existing working schedule for chief officers of the department. It has already been done to some extent with the x days. In some way this should be expanded or modified to meet the challenges of today's operations. It is inconclusive, at this point, whether the schedule that was used as part of this study or one similar to it would ever be appropriate for the City of Two Rivers given its existing compliment of personnel and the uniqueness of the department itself. However, this study concludes that some types of alterations are necessary to address the administrative functions of the department and recommends the following.

1. The process needs to participatory incorporating input from throughout the organization.
2. The health and safety of the citizens it serves and the members of the fire department are of paramount importance.
3. The process of defining alternate scheduling should build upon the positive outcomes of the x day concept already utilized successfully by the department.
4. Any endeavor undertaken should be constantly evaluated to determine effectiveness.

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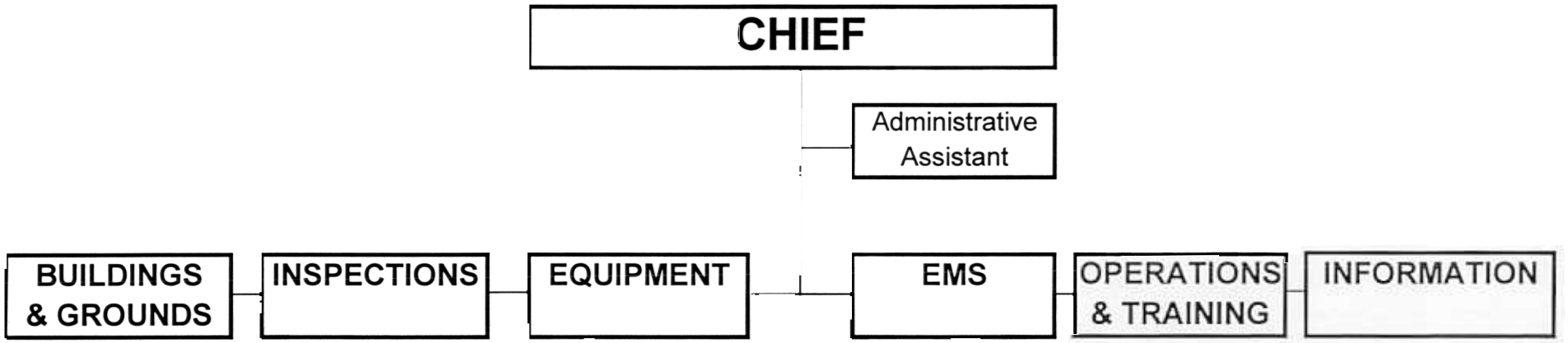
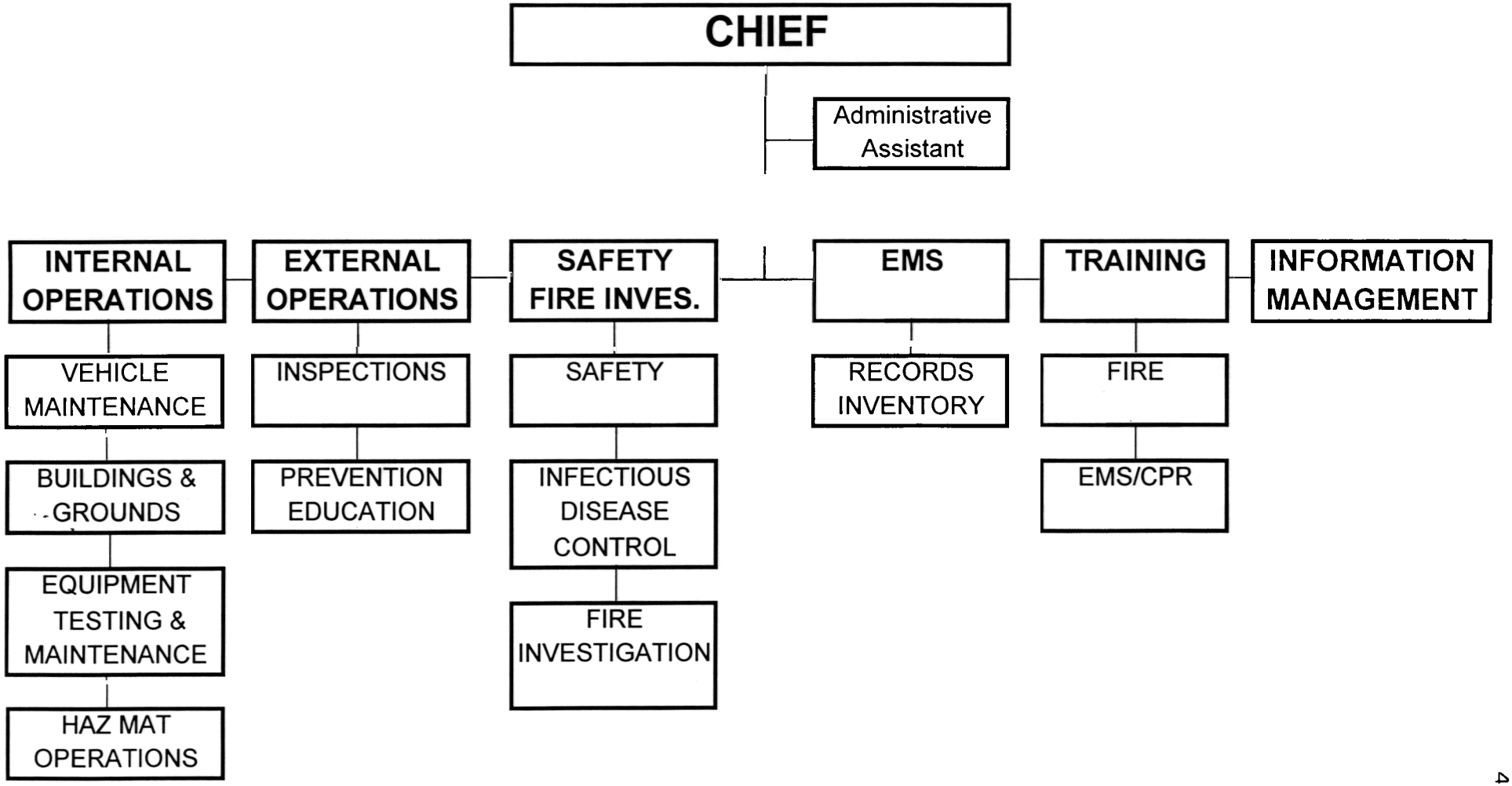
# APPENDIX A

# STAFF ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# APPENDIX B

# STAFF ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

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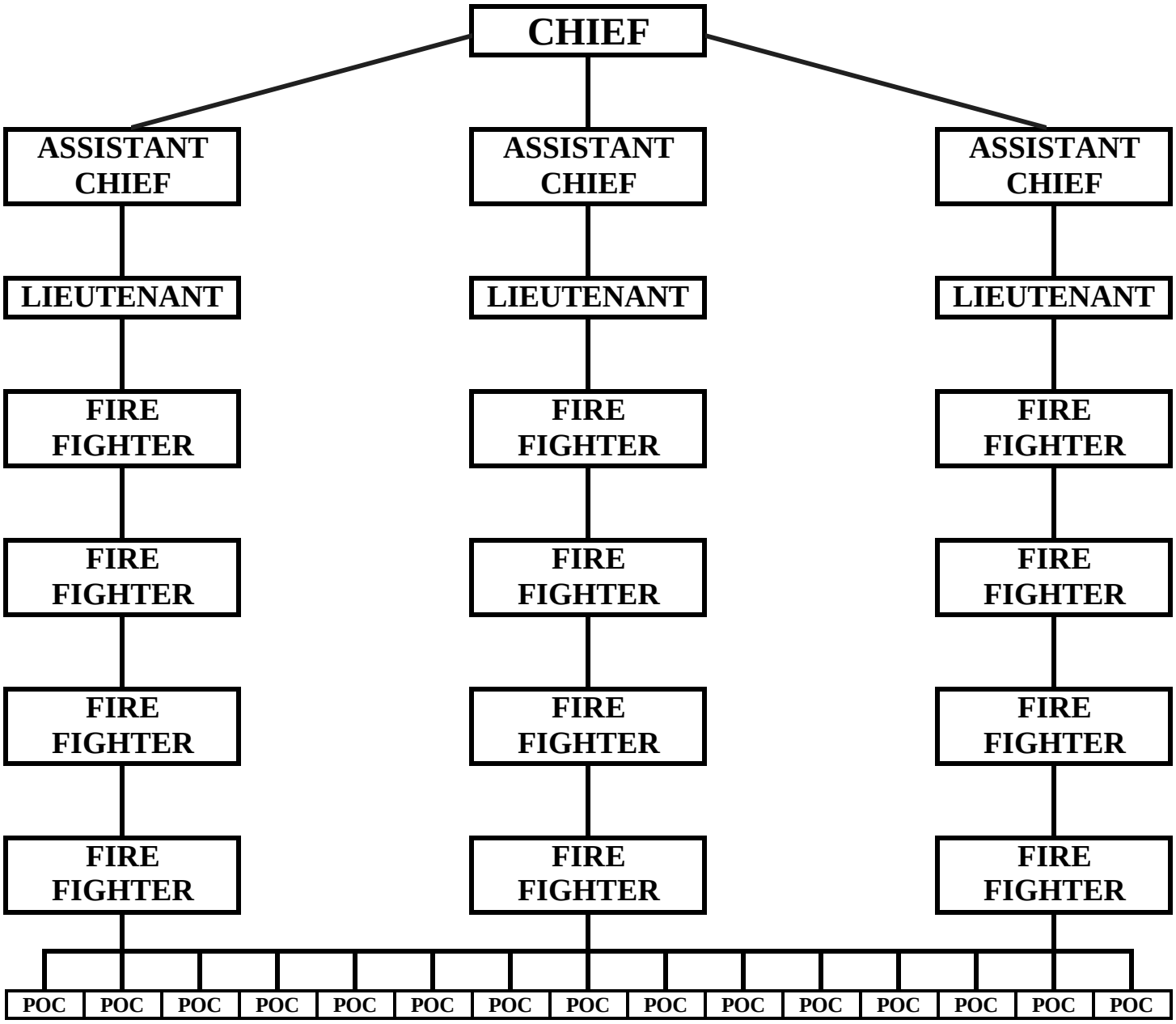
# APPENDIX C

# TWO RIVERS FIRE DEPARTMENT LINE FUNCTIONS



# APPENDIX D

**SURVEY FOR ASSISTANT CHIEFS**

The department is currently studying the feasibility of altering the work schedule for the assistant chiefs' position. The alteration being contemplated is away from the traditional 24 hour California Shift Plan to another that would ensure more normal business hour coverage by the administrators in these positions. The first two questions deal with two concepts that are currently in use in the department. Please evaluate. Space has been left for additional comments. Please attach additional pieces of paper as needed.

1. Rate the work schedule (California Plan) for its effectiveness as it pertains to the City of Two Rivers Fire Department's assistant chiefs.

| | Ineffective | | Effective | | Very Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Availability to internal customers | | | | | |
| Availability to external customers | | | | | |
| Coordination of administrative duties | | | | | |
| Administrative planning | | | | | |
| Completion of special projects assigned by chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fellow officers | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire fighters | | | | | |
| Enhancement of coordination with other city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with agencies other than city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of emergency responses | | | | | |

COMMENTS:

2. X-days were instituted to address the administrative functions of assistant chiefs. Rate the effectiveness of x-days for the following categories.

| | Ineffective | | Effective | | Very Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Availability to internal customers | | | | | |
| Availability to external customers | | | | | |
| Coordination of administrative duties | | | | | |
| Administrative planning | | | | | |
| Completion of special projects assigned by chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fellow officers | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire fighters | | | | | |
| Enhancement of coordination with other city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with agencies other than city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of emergency responses | | | | | |

COMMENTS:

3. The attached sheet is being presented as an example of an alternative work schedule for chief officers in our department. It is meant to serve as a starting point only. Many associated issues are involved and will need to be discussed by all affected parties. To begin the process, please evaluate the attached schedule. Space has been left for additional comments. Please attach additional pieces of paper as needed. For the purpose of this evaluation assume that the following will be initiated with this plan.

   1. Merit increase for assistant chiefs
   2. Equitable vacation compensations
   3. Increased use of acting classification personnel
   4. Less daily line responsibilities

| | Ineffective | | Effective | | Very Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Availability to Internal Customers | | | | | |
| Availability to External Customers | | | | | |
| Coordination of Administrative Duties | | | | | |
| Administrative Planning | | | | | |
| Completion of Special Projects assigned by Chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Fire Chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Fellow Officers | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Fire Fighters | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Coordination with Other City Departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Agencies Other than City Departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Emergency Responses | | | | | |

COMMENTS:

4. Please list in order of importance the benefits as you see it in a plan of this kind.

5. Please list in order of importance the detriments of initiating this schedule for chief officers in the Two Rivers Fire Department.

# A/C ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULE

| MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A/C 1 8/16 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8/16 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8/16 | A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8<br>CHIEF 16 | A/C 2 24<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 3 24 | A/C 1 24 |
| A/C 2 8/16 | A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8/16 | A/C 1 8/16<br>A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 3 8<br>CHIEF 16 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 3 24 | A/C 1 24 | A/C 2 24 |
| A/C 3 8/16 | A/C 1 8/16<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8/16<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8<br>CHIEF 16 | A/C 1 24<br>A/C 2 8 | A/C 2 24 | A/C 3 24 |

| KEY | |
|---|---|
| **8** | 8 hr work day |
| **8/16** | 8 hr work day/16 hrs on call |
| **24** | 24 hr work day |

# APPENDIX E

**SURVEY FOR LIEUTENANTS**

The department is currently studying the feasibility of altering the work schedule for the assistant chiefs' position. The alteration being contemplated is away from the traditional 24 hour California Shift Plan to another that would ensure more normal business hour coverage by the administrators in these positions. The first two questions deal with two concepts that are currently in use in the department. Please evaluate. Space has been left for additional comments. Please attach additional pieces of paper as needed.

1. Rate the work schedule (California Plan) for its effectiveness as it pertains to the City of Two Rivers Fire Department's assistant chiefs.

| | Ineffective | | Effective | | Very Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Availability to internal customers | | | | | |
| Availability to external customers | | | | | |
| Coordination of administrative duties | | | | | |
| Administrative planning | | | | | |
| Completion of special projects assigned by chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fellow officers | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire fighters | | | | | |
| Enhancement of coordination with other city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with agencies other than city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of emergency responses | | | | | |

COMMENTS:

2. X-days were instituted to address the administrative functions of assistant chiefs. Rate the effectiveness of x-days for the following categories.

| | Ineffective | | Effective | | Very Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Availability to internal customers | | | | | |
| Availability to external customers | | | | | |
| Coordination of administrative duties | | | | | |
| Administrative planning | | | | | |
| Completion of special projects assigned by chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fellow officers | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with fire fighters | | | | | |
| Enhancement of coordination with other city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of communications with agencies other than city departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of emergency responses | | | | | |

COMMENTS:

3. The attached sheet is being presented as an example of an alternative work schedule for chief officers in our department. It is meant to serve as a starting point only. Many associated issues are involved and will need to be discussed by all affected parties. To begin the process, please evaluate the attached schedule. Space has been left for additional comments. Please attach additional pieces of paper as needed. For the purpose of this evaluation assume that the following will be initiated with this plan.

   1. Merit increase for assistant chiefs
   2. Equitable vacation compensations
   3. Increased use of acting classification personnel
   4. Less daily line responsibilities

| | Ineffective | | Effective | | Very Effective |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Availability to Internal Customers | | | | | |
| Availability to External Customers | | | | | |
| Coordination of Administrative Duties | | | | | |
| Administrative Planning | | | | | |
| Completion of Special Projects assigned by Chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Fire Chief | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Fellow Officers | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Fire Fighters | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Coordination with Other City Departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Communications with Agencies Other than City Departments | | | | | |
| Enhancement of Emergency Responses | | | | | |

COMMENTS:

4. Please list in order of importance the benefits as you see it in a plan of this kind.

5. Please list in order of importance the detriments of initiating this schedule for chief officers in the Two Rivers Fire Department.

6. Would the change in the work schedule for the assistant chiefs to an alternate schedule, similar to the attached sample,

   a. be an incentive for you testing for the position.

   b. be a detriment for you testing for the position.

   c. have no effect on you testing for the position.

PLEASE COMMENT:

# A/C ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULE

| MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A/C 1 8/16 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8/16 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8/16 | A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8<br>CHIEF 16 | A/C 2 24<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 3 24 | A/C 1 24 |
| A/C 2 8/16 | A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8/16 | A/C 1 8/16<br>A/C 2 8<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 3 8<br>CHIEF 16 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 3 24 | A/C 1 24 | A/C 2 24 |
| A/C 3 8/16 | A/C 1 8/16<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8/16<br>A/C 3 8 | A/C 1 8<br>A/C 2 8<br>CHIEF 16 | A/C 1 24<br>A/C 2 8 | A/C 2 24 | A/C 3 24 |

| KEY | |
|---|---|
| **8** | 8 hr work day |
| **8/16** | 8 hr work day/16 hrs on call |
| **24** | 24 hr work day |