

Identifying operational impacts resulting from the consolidation of South Kitsap Fire and Rescue and the Bremerton Fire Department.

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that the appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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### Abstract

A six month study is currently being conducted to explore the feasibility of consolidating South Kitsap Fire and Rescue (SKFR) and the Bremerton Fire Department (BFD) into a Regional Fire Authority (RFA) over the next year. The main issues being addressed in this study are governance, funding, efficiencies, and the processes for legally joining agencies. The problem is that the potential new agency has not identified the operational issues that need to be addressed to implement an effective consolidation. The purpose of the research has been to identify operational strategies or issues that should be addressed in the first six months of the consolidation. A descriptive research methodology was utilized to answer the following questions: What operational implementation problems have other agencies identified when consolidating organizations of comparable departments? What are the emergency response considerations of a consolidation within SKFR and the BFD? What are the administrative concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation within SKFR and the BFD? What are the personnel concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation?

A literature review, interviews, and a questionnaire identified key issues and problems encountered by other agencies that had consolidated. They also addressed internal concerns by the administrations and labor groups within both SKFR and the BFD about operational issues impacted by consolidation. The results of these processes identified a number of concerns and potential issues, yet found no significant obstacles to prevent a successful consolidation of operations with these two agencies. Recommendations were made to involve strong labor management relations in the process, identify key equipment and policy issues at appropriate times, identify past and define future levels of service, and address the membership's concerns about selection of agency leadership and distribution of workloads.

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## Introduction

The Kitsap Peninsula has experienced numerous mergers and consolidations of smaller fire agencies with neighboring jurisdictions over the past 35 years. These previous consolidations have reduced Kitsap County from an original number of 27 fire agencies in 1964 to the current number of six agencies serving the area today. In 2007, a Cooperative Services Feasibility Study (Emergency Services Consulting Inc. [ESCI], 2007) was completed to examine the possible consolidation of three of the six agencies: Central Kitsap Fire and Rescue (CKFR), Bremerton Fire Department (BFD), and South Kitsap Fire and Rescue (SKFR). The study found justification for the three agencies to work towards a consolidation, yet after several years this effort was discontinued due to a number of complexities. In an attempt to continue working toward consolidation of agencies, a decision was made to proceed on a reduced scale with two of the three agencies involved in the study consolidating initially. Through a process determined by the City of Bremerton and their fire department, a decision was made to work with SKFR first. Currently a six month study is underway working on the issues of governance, funding, efficiencies, and processes for legally joining agencies.

With this process in motion, SKFR and the BFD will most likely consolidate organizations into a (RFA) over the next year. The problem is that the potential new agency has not identified the operational issues that need to be addressed to implement an effective consolidation. The purpose of the research is to identify operational strategies or issues that should be addressed in the first six months of the consolidation. A descriptive research methodology will be utilized to answer the following questions: What operational implementation problems have other agencies identified when consolidating organizations of comparable departments? What are the emergency response considerations of a consolidation,

within SKFR and the BFD? What are the administrative concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation, within SKFR and the BFD? What are the personnel concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation?

#### Background and significance

Many of Kitsap County's fire agencies were established in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century as communities grew out of the rural landscape and required organized services. This process brought about numerous small community fire departments that served individual areas at a basic level. As service level demands and community expectations increased, these small departments gradually came together into consolidated departments that commonly served geographic areas on the peninsula. SKFR is a fire district built from a number of past consolidations. Those departments included Kitsap County Fire Protection District (KCFPD) #7 South Kitsap, KCFPD #6 Sunnyslope, KCFPD #8 Navy Yard City, and KCFPD #19 Rocky Point. The City of Port Orchard Fire Department merged into the fire district in 1998. Over a period of time, all of the geographical areas once covered by those departments were consolidated into one fire district and renamed South Kitsap Fire and Rescue to better reflect the communities served (South Kitsap Fire and Rescue [SKFR], 2009).

Today SKFR is located on the southern third of the Kitsap Peninsula in the center of the Puget Sound basin. Primarily a residential community with an estimated population of 78,500, the district covers 127 square miles. Due to the features of the peninsula, the district has 22 miles of tidal waterfront and adjacent salt-water areas. SKFR's current borders are the Pierce County line on the southern edge, the Mason County line on the western edge, and the City of Bremerton and Puget Sound to the north and on the east. SKFR is a combination fire district with a career line staffing of 84 and volunteer membership of 55. From its start in 1946 as a volunteer

organization, the district has made the transition to a combination department primarily over the past 35 years with the hiring of career staff starting in the 1970s. Operating from one station at that time, the career staffing has increased gradually over time and has been distributed around the district converting un-staffed stations to staffed. Today SKFR has eight of its sixteen stations staffed on a full time basis. The district provides basic and advance life support with transportation to medical facilities and fire suppression services (South Kitsap Fire and Rescue [SKFR], 2010).

The City of Bremerton was one of the first established cities on the Kitsap Peninsula with the Bremerton Naval Shipyard as a driving force in both employment and growth for the city. The city recognized the need for organized fire protection in the late nineteenth century and established a fire department on May 7, 1901. The first twenty years of the BFD included growth in many areas: tools and equipment, communications, and early apparatus. Staffing at the time consisted of volunteers until 1921 when the department hired the first six paid firefighters. Becoming established as a career agency following these initial hires, the BFD grew to a high of 80 career members during the World War Two years with the significant naval and shipyard presence in the community. The city today consists of nine square miles of urban area and eleven square miles of forested watershed located in the central portion of the Kitsap Peninsula bordered by SKFR to the south and CKFR to the north. The BFD currently operates from three stations with 54 line personnel. The city provides basic and advanced life support (ALS) with ALS transportation to medical facilities and fire suppression services. Annual responses for 2009 were 7502. (City of Bremerton website, 2010.)

From 2007 through 2009 a consolidation effort was attempted between the three larger fire agencies in Kitsap County: SKFR, BFD, and CKFR. A Cooperative Services Feasibility

Study (Emergency Services Consulting Inc. [ESCI], 2007) showed opportunity existed for efficiencies and positive impacts for the communities involved. Following considerable efforts, this three agency consolidation effort was discontinued for a number of reasons. Financial impacts of the current recession, collective bargaining agreements, and general resistance to change or the unknown were among the issues. Following this unsuccessful effort to bring together a three agency consolidation, the City of Bremerton was asked by the other two agencies to choose one department to work with first. In late 2009, SKFR and CKFR presented written proposals to both the BFD firefighters local and the Bremerton City Council. The outcome from these proposals was a recommendation for the BFD to work with SKFR for a six month period developing a plan for consolidation of the two agencies. This effort is currently in process and moving forward on the major issues of creating a combined fire agency under the RFA process allowed in Washington State. The creation of an RFA will require drafting an initial work plan and the support of the community on a ballot measure. Utilizing the experiences from the past consolidation efforts as an opportunity to make the consolidation of SKFR and BFD successful, this six month study is moving forward and working through issues at a definitive rate.

The purpose of this research project is to look beyond the establishment of the new agency under the RFA process. While not a guarantee, this process appears to be moving towards a successful completion with an expectation to place the issue before the electorate in the next year. Looking beyond the creation of a new agency to serve the communities of South Kitsap and the City of Bremerton, are the operational challenges of bringing two established agencies together as one. Kitsap County has a history of good cooperation amongst the fire agencies. This history will help in many ways as any new agency is established within the

county. Common areas of operations currently exist in training manuals, dispatch center, automatic and mutual aid, Medical Program Director (MPD), records management system, and county chiefs associations. These common areas will be a starting point for establishing parts of the new agency. Beyond these common points remains a significant amount of unknown that is yet to be identified. The joining of two similar yet different agencies will require identification of and agreement on many new work practices. Emergency response and service level objective, standard and emergency operating procedures, collective bargaining agreements and labor management related issues are part of the operational issues that need to be identified, planned for, and dealt with once the consolidation has a projected start date.

This Applied Research Project (ARP) directly relates to the third United States Fire Administration operational objective: “Improve the fire and emergency services’ capability for response to and recovery from all hazards.” (Department of Homeland Security, 2009, p. II-2) Consolidated fire services in Kitsap County have historically increased agency depth and scope of services provided once completed. The current consolidation efforts between BFD and SKFR are intended to improve the response capability for fire and emergency services in all operational and administrative areas. The purpose of this research paper is to identify operational strategies that should be addressed in the first six months of the consolidation in order to make it efficient and successful.

The topic of this ARP also directly relates to one of the main concepts covered in the National Fire Academy Executive Development course and the pre-course reading. In the book *Leadership on the Line* (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) the authors bring the readers to differentiate between two types of leadership: technical problems and adaptive change. A technical problem is an issue with a solution that is understood or known and a leader with position authority can

direct and facilitate the change. The book goes on to explain about the more challenging issue of adaptive change as it relates to situations where a solution is not known and the problem may require moving people to new places, mentally or physically. This type of leadership and change affects hearts and minds and requires a number of different approaches to implement. At the heart of the consolidation efforts for the personnel of SKFR and BFD is adaptive change. At the current time both agencies are well established and operating in a manner that has been in place for a number of years. Combining these two agencies together and building a functional new department out of the two will require change at this adaptive level throughout both organizations.

#### Literature Review

Operational problems identified by others.

The history and nature of consolidations in the fire service over the past thirty years have shown implementation problems do typically exist. A key aspect in working through and achieving cooperative success on these problem issues is to recognize and initiate proactive measures to diminish or limit their impact as they are addressed. In their book, "Making the Pieces Fit", Snook and Johnson (1997) recommend actively working to communicate, educate, and inform the membership on issues. Develop and maintain relationships that bring stakeholders to the table and keep open minds that foster patience when dealing with problem issues. They also recognize the importance of identifying service level objectives and capitalizing on organizational and individual strengths (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 77).

When looking at operational trends and patterns that the fire service faces now and in the future, the tendency to move towards an all risk service delivery with increasing complexity of operations, continued emphasis on EMS, technology and its impacts on all areas of operations

are all recognized as potential problems (Coleman, 2006, p. 444). Agencies working on consolidation are faced with problems to address in order to achieve success. These issues are not unlike critical issues facing the fire service in general today in this country. In setting the stage for the future, six critical issues must be considered: fire station distribution and concentration of resources to support the population served with adequate response, department risk assessment procedures that address changing and new threats that impact fire service operations, information management systems and getting the most benefit out of these systems in this new information age, staffing of personnel and addressing work schedules that may move away from the traditional shift schedule, developing and communicating plans to help the taxpayers understand the issues relating to funding for adequate and sustainable levels of service; and agencies critically evaluating response times and subsequently establish service level objectives in order to resolve issues (Coleman, 2006, p. 445).

Due to the myriad of established procedures and practices that departments come together with, challenges of operational consolidations are many. Processes that worked for each agency separately must be combined. This could be as simple as supply requisition or as complex as new fireground procedures. The change, by its very nature, will disrupt department routine and the daily work for the employees. Attempting to operate a consolidated agency on two systems is difficult. It is often far more efficient to move the new agency to one system and completely disregard the other (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 18).

Operational concerns in the service delivery realm and the compatibility of departments is an area to be evaluated. Consolidated agencies must develop run cards and deployment plans to operate as a new agency. These plans must be built on response standards, staffing levels, and patterns that achieve the community's expectations and comply with state and federal mandates.

Consolidated agencies must address pre arrival planning issues through common risk assessment procedures as well as alignment of quick reference and prefire planning material. Incident command and personnel accountability systems must also be incorporated into operational plans for safe and effective fire ground operations (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 72).

Identifying the numerous operational and personnel issues involved in consolidations will help to facilitate success for the agencies involved. Operational issues including station distribution, staffing levels, standard operating procedures, apparatus and equipment types and use, records management systems, and prevention and support services programs will need to be addressed. Personnel issues that must be dealt with include salary and benefit packages, retirement systems, hiring, and promotional practices. Operational and personnel issues affect the compatibility of agencies and must be given adequate time and effort to communicate and resolve in order to minimize the effects of change on the membership and organizations (Smoke, 2003, p. 29).

#### Administrative and personnel concerns

A question that is commonly asked during the consolidation process by the membership involved is “what will this do to me?” It is human nature to consider the personal impacts that directly affect individuals. Open and constant communication is the most effective way to calm these anxieties and limit problems or concerns. The adoption of new processes and the efforts required to implement changes are most problematic for mid level managers. They are often responsible for developing and implementing programs; therefore, changes tend to directly affect them due to their position. Addressing the human nature piece of the change process and helping individuals let go of past methods and ownership in programs will limit problems for the new organization (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 18).

In identifying significant workforce concerns related to consolidations Mazza (2007, p. 20) found the seven highest were: (a) maintaining of current compensation and benefits, (b) parity of minimum apparatus staffing, (c) governance of the new organization, (d) assignment of new chief officer positions, (e) assignment of the agency chief position, (f) membership seniority, (g) work hours and shift schedules. These personnel concerns represented issues that needed to be dealt with in order for a consolidation to move ahead due to their overall importance to the membership in both organizations.

Johnson and Snook (1997) identify four common factors that influence the success or failure of agencies coming together. These “big four” include turf, politics, power, and control. Turf relates to our inherent territorial interests and issues or methods we have grown accustomed to. Politics deals with the interests of all stakeholders and their motivation to work towards a favorable outcome based on their interests. Power issues involve the ability to influence or inhibit change as the new agency is formed or developed. Control addresses governance issues and the level of control at the policymaker level. Awareness that each of these four issues can impact the consolidation effort at any time is important to the key leadership guiding the process (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 97).

Human resource concerns are critical to any successful transition. New member hiring practices, probation requirements, and both probationary and promotional testing procedures need to be addressed. Employee programs for safety and wellness need to be identified to include committee assignments, meeting schedules, and record and report keeping. Development of personnel policies, performance expectations, and standards are also important in the areas that need to be critically studied. All topics in this area affect labor management relations and normally take place through impact bargaining rules with the affected employees. Open

communications and a willingness to work together is a reoccurring theme involved with success (Snook & Johnson, 1997, Chapter 8).

Chief Ron Coleman (2008) writes that for organizations to come together both organizationally and administratively, there is a spectrum of behaviors that are commonly seen and must be worked through. These include conflict, confrontations, communication of intent, cooperative efforts, collaborative efforts, and consolidated efforts. Conflict often manifests itself early in the process as agencies find little common ground and disagree on points of discussion. Often agencies position themselves in their own corners, opposite from the other. Confrontations, although similar to conflict, are more open and start to bring about discussion on differences. Communication with intent is the start of things opening up and agencies beginning to engage in both listening and talking. Cooperation is when agencies start to develop trust and work together on accomplishing things that each alone can not. The collaboration stage is noted when agencies mutually invest in activities and projects while still maintaining their autonomy. Consolidation is the step when agencies give up their own identities and begin to function as one. Agencies must start working from where they currently are in this spectrum and move forward as the situation allows. If agencies are midway into this spectrum at the beginning of consolidation talks, the process is more likely to go smoothly and have a higher likelihood of ultimate success (Coleman, 2008, p. 30).

In their article “Uneasy Alliance”, Lochard and Olson (2006) identify several situations to be aware of relating to administrative concerns during consolidations. They address that conflicts will occur during any consolidation process and a plan for finding resolution must be established. An issue that not only affects the confidence of the membership but also the potential quality of the new agency administration, is senior leadership being selected for reasons

other than competency and character. Two other areas touched on were the lack of detailed written plans and reluctance for the process or over involvement in operational issues by the elected officials. (Lochard & Olsen, 2006, p. 58).

Emergency response considerations.

Consolidation of agencies will inevitably require some form of defining a beginning point as separate agencies and an ending point as a new consolidated agency relating to emergency service delivery. Individually, agencies should have data that defines the baseline of service levels they are providing to their communities. Components of this may include capital assists, resources, staffing, response and workload analysis (ESCI, 2007).

In Washington State, fire agencies are rated by the Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau (WSRB) and given a rating for overall agency performance on a scale of one to ten. A rating of one being the very best fire protection available and a rating of ten being no fire protection at all. The WSRB evaluates agencies on station location, training, staffing, equipment, maintenance, and water supply. The grading of fire agencies reflects the level of protection provided in each community based on a consistent scale statewide. The rating process also assists agencies in planning and budgeting for improvement in specific areas. Many property insurance companies utilize this WSRB information in determining level of risk for insured property. In looking at comparable levels of service during consolidation efforts, this rating would provide a definable level of measurement in the areas used to develop the rating (Washington Surveying and Rating Bureau website, 2010).

The International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) addresses fire service delivery and maintains data on the number of firefighters per 1000 members of population served. This national average of 1.6 represents a point of reference for staffing based against

population served. ICMA also endorses the fire service accreditation model presented by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) as a credible source for fire agency service delivery (International City/County Managers Association website, 2010).

The CPSE and the CFAI provide a very comprehensive program for fire service management and best practices. Common elements of the program include standards establishment and recognized baselines and benchmarks for service delivery and improvement. The program also includes a documented self assessment and evaluation process that covers all areas of agency operation. The accreditation process includes independent third party review and on site evaluation. Once an agency receives accredited status, annual reporting on agency improvements and a five year re-accreditation review is required to maintain this status (Center for Public Safety Excellence, Inc. [CPSE], 2006, p. 13). The CFAI process also requires a detailed document on the Standards of Cover (SOC) provided to the community served as well as strategic planning documents and development of annual goals and objectives for the agency. Each of these documents provides information about specific details of agency operation and how the agency is delivering emergency services to the community served (CPSE, 2006, Chapter 1).

The SOC document covers a significant number of areas that directly relate to how emergency services are delivered in a community. The CFAI describes the SOC as “Standards of response coverage are defined as those written policies and procedures that establish the distribution and concentration of fixed and mobile resources of an organization”. Looking specifically at the individual components of a SOC document, they can be broken out into the following major areas: identifying community risks, identifying community expectations

of service levels, distribution and concentration of resources, system reliability, and baseline reporting of performance (CPSE, 2006, p. 47).

Risk assessment for the community served includes several key components and is an important part in determining the level of service needed. The required fire flow necessary for the occupancy being protected is one significant factor for fire risk. An evaluation of probability relates to the likelihood an event will occur at any given time or location. This is often completed with historical data assessing the consequences for a community should an event occur. These consequences cover a number of different areas namely property loss, life safety, community economic impact, and environmental impact. Occupancy risk relates to specific concerns about fire's inherent impact on a given structure. All of these risk concerns are scored to develop a risk matrix for each fire management zone within the jurisdiction. Areas that present higher risk require a greater concentration of resources for proper mitigation of those risks (Center for Public Safety Excellence, Inc. [CPSE], 2008, Chapter 3).

Defining community expectations for service level is a major outcome of drafting a SOC per the guidelines specified by CFAI. Each community establishes a level of service within general acceptable bounds based on its willingness to fund that service. Expectations as to the time it will take for fire department personnel to arrive on scene and in what numbers should be defined. The element of time divided into segments includes call processing at the emergency communications center as a starting point. The turnout time is the time it takes for responding personnel, once notified, to be ready to respond. Lastly, the travel time for units is the time it takes to respond from their station to the emergency scene. All of these elements make up what communities often think of as a response time. Defining the response time for given requests for

service may include areas such as first engine on a fire scene, first paramedic at an aid call, or the complete complement of apparatus and personnel at a fire scene (CPSE, 2008, Chapter 5).

Response times are also developed based on the nature of the area served. Area classification based on population or physical factors in a given section of the community are also considered. CFAI breaks down this classification into metropolitan, urban, suburban, rural, and wilderness. Each of these areas receives response time goals based on their specific classification (CPSE, 2008, p. 20). On scene personnel numbers are also addressed in the SOC process by looking at the specific requirements for the type of request. Critical tasking for structural fires reflect a systematic approach to the number of firefighters required to accomplish defined standard tasks. Critical tasking numbers will vary based on the nature of the incident ranging from advanced life support to hazardous material and wild-land incidents (CPSE, 2008, Chapter 3).

The CFAI process also provides a method for placing stations, equipment, and personnel throughout the jurisdiction. These methods are referred to as the distribution and concentration of resources. Distribution looks at the geographic location of stations and relates directly to first due apparatus and response times. Concentration deals with the arrangement of multiple resource spacing and getting the appropriate number of personnel and apparatus to a given request for service. Distribution and concentration, along with the reliability of units to respond to requests for service in their station area, make up a defined methodology for how to structure a fire agency for emergency response (CPSE, 2008, Chapter 4).

A final piece of the CFAI process involves setting of response goals. These goals are set with a benchmark for an agency to work towards, both in response times and in personnel numbers. Every agency should have a baseline or current data to define a starting point for improvement. These times are documented and reported in a fractal of data typically set at 90%.

This method is more accurate than a simple averaging of the data for a given area (CPSE, 2006, p. 31).

In Washington State, a Revised Code of Washington (RCW) was placed into law in 2007 that requires substantially career fire departments to set and report on service level objectives on an annual basis. The legislature recognized the efforts of the (ICMA), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for their ability to direct or guide the deployment decisions of resources in individual jurisdictions. This service level and reporting requirement requires the same information and reporting methods for all departments in the state that fall under this RCW. The required information and methodology used in this reporting closely mirrors the CFAI requirements in the SOC process (Access Washington website, 2010).

The (NFPA) provides guidance for fire department emergency response and operational deployment in the NFPA 1710 standard. The standard has minimum requirements for organization and deployment of resources in fire suppression, emergency medical and special operations for substantially career departments. These standards relate to service delivery, response capability, and recommended resources. NFPA 1710 addresses strategic and systems issues at the organizational level and does not address specific incident tactical issues. A comparison of consolidating agencies to the recommendations in this standard would provide a consistent level or baseline (National Fire Protection Association website, 2010).

In summarizing the literature review, issues commonly seen when consolidating fire agencies have been identified and documented across a broad spectrum of potential issues. Adopting this body of information to the specific circumstances related to individual agencies will be the challenge of agencies attempting this process. Operational problems identified by

others include the need for open and frequent communications with all stakeholders. Also important is the development of a common system for personnel related issues and agency policies and procedures. The need to step away from two separate systems and operate under one common method must be addressed. Administrative and personnel concerns involve the new leadership of the agency and the governance set up to oversee it. Membership interest will also be focused on who will have power or influence in key decision making areas. There also needs to be recognition that much of the workload and stress of implementing a consolidation falls on the mid level managers in the agency. Emergency response considerations require a systematic approach for looking at current levels of service and defined methodology for developing a new response system for the consolidated agency. Several methods currently in practice offer guidance and structure in these areas.

#### Procedures

The procedures utilized to prepare this ARP included the development of research questions, literature review, interviews, and a questionnaire instrument. The research included a review of literature on topics relating to fire agency consolidation and operational and employee concerns impacted by consolidations. The research began initially at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy (NFA) where searches were conducted with staff to acquire available information relating to the topic. Similar processes were undertaken through the Kitsap County Library System to broaden the resources utilized. In addition, research was conducted online utilizing the common internet search features available today. Additional documents relating to the subject were also gathered from fire department's in house and local sources. The overall literature review included books, journals, manuals and other written materials as well as information available from internet sources.

After the literature review was completed a series of questions (Appendix A) were developed to guide a structured interview process. The questions developed were intended to focus on and gain information relating to the first and second research questions for this ARP. These two research questions involved information that would require input from outside agencies that had consolidated and were comparable to SKFR and BFD. The departments chosen for the interviews were limited to the Western Washington area due to the regional demographics, similarity of operations, state regulations applying to consolidation, and labor issues. The members interviewed were chief officer level leadership. At the beginning of the interview the author stated the purpose of the ARP and reviewed the ARP questions the interview was directed towards. The interviews were scheduled in early summer to avoid the personal leaves of the membership involved in the process. These interviews were scheduled and conducted at the interviewees departments and required between sixty and ninety minutes to conduct depending on the depth and scope of the answers given. Each chief interviewed was allowed to freely discuss and expand on each question.

A second set of interview questions (Appendix B) were developed intending to focus on and gain information relating to the third research question for this ARP. Information relating to the third research question was to be gained from the membership of both SKFR and BFD. The nature of this ARP question related directly to operational concerns from the administrations of the agencies involved in the consolidation. Interviews were conducted with administrative chief officers in both SKFR and BFD. The purpose of the ARP and the interviews were again explained at the start of the interview process. Each chief interviewed was allowed to freely discuss and expand on each question. All of the information gained in the interviews was analyzed and summarized for use in the discussion and results section of this project.

The fourth research question required information from the members of SKFR and BFD at the line or personnel level. An organization questionnaire (Appendix C) was developed to gain information on this question. The questionnaire was designed to identify personnel concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation using a one to ten rating scale. An opportunity to expand on each question was also provided to the responder. The elected officials (E-board) for the two firefighter locals representing the memberships of SKFR and BFD were asked to fill out the questionnaire. The author made contact with each local's representatives and explained the ARP topic, its scope, and requested assistance from each group in completing the questionnaire. These two E-boards lead the labor organizations and present the collective voice of the membership on issues within each organization. Information from this questionnaire was analyzed and placed into a table (Appendix D) to help identify the priority and nature of the membership's concerns regarding the operational issues impacted by consolidation.

Both sets of structured interview questions and the organization questionnaire were developed based on information needed to address the ARP research questions. The literature review also helped identify and narrow down questions into specific areas. Once drafted, both the interview questions and the organization questionnaire were submitted to three individuals not involved in this project or the consolidation efforts for review. These three individuals were also provided with a copy of the four ARP questions directing this research. Their review checked question structure, intent, and ability for the question to relate back to and answer the four ARP research questions.

It is important to identify certain limitations of this descriptive research project and the procedures used. The personal interviews conducted with chief officers made the assumption that the interviewee was qualified by position to have accurate information relating to the topic and

questions utilized during the interview. During interviews conducted with staff from SKFR and BFD, a potential existed for personal bias in each answer as the subject related directly to the members personal situation and future placement in the consolidated agency. The organization questionnaire used to gather membership information from SKFR and BFD for the fourth research question was limited to only the E-boards of the two locals and may not have represented all the membership's positions. Also, within the E-boards of the two locals, the potential existed for personal bias in each answer.

#### Definition of terms

**Mutual aid** – Mutual aid agreements are legal agreements established between agencies for the sharing of resources when an agency is depleted of resources or in need of specific types of resources. Intended to be mutual in receipt with both parties, at times, requesting assistance from the other. Aid is given only if the rendering agency has available resources to commit.

**Automatic aid** - Automatic aid agreements are legal agreements between agencies establishing that the appropriate unit is dispatched to a request for service regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. Automatic aid is not always mutual in receipt and compensation may be given by the receiving agency.

**Consolidation** – Consolidation of two or more fire agencies services to improve efficiency and effectiveness of fire agencies. Allows for better use of resources and reduces duplication of services.

**Partial consolidation** – Agencies remain legally separate but share in a common area for specific functions. An example would be the joint staffing of a fire station between communities.

Functional consolidation – Consolidation of specific areas of department operations while the overall agency remains independent. Examples include training divisions or facilities, shared vehicle maintenance, or a dispatch center operating for a number of agencies.

Operational consolidation – When two agencies join together operationally or administratively to deliver services. The agencies remain legally independent but function as one agency.

Fire agency operations – The portion of the fire service or agency relating to providing the service delivery to the community serviced. Common areas include fire suppression, emergency medical services, and rescue.

Mergers – When two or more agencies legally become one new agency. Former agencies are dissolved with one merging into the other; typically the larger agency receives the smaller.

Fire District – An un-incorporated county area with defined boundaries dedicated to the delivery of fire and emergency specific services. A single function local government.

City – A municipality that provides governance and services for an incorporated geographic area. Cities are multi purpose government providing a number of services for the citizens serviced.

## Results

The first research question asks “What operational implementation problems have other agencies identified when consolidating organizations of comparable departments?” Together the literature review and the personal interviews with chief officers from comparable sized consolidated departments identified numerous problems agencies have dealt with during past consolidations. The specifics of how these potential problems impact agencies considering consolidation relates directly to the individual circumstances with the agencies involved.

One issue identified was the development of standard operating procedures for the new agency to operate under once formed. Snook and Johnson (1997) believe that an agency will not operate properly under two sets of policies or operating procedures (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 18). Several methods of working through this issue were identified in this research. When a smaller agency joins a larger established agency, the smaller agency may simply work under the larger agency's policies and procedures. In these cases, employee training resembles the same material covered in new employee orientation type classes (P. Donovan, personal communication, June 22, 2010). In situations where new policies must be drafted, working with labor and management representatives to combine parts from both consolidating agency's existing policies is a place to start. While some policies can wait until the new agency becomes established, it is important to have personnel related issues and policies related to any consolidation work plan established at the start of the consolidation (J. Walkowski, personal communication, June 22, 2010). Incident management and fire ground procedures need to be addressed for effective and safe on scene operations. While most agencies today operate with some structure or plan in this area, if a common approach is not identified it should be established in the early stages of any consolidation effort (J. McDonald, personal communication, June 15, 2010).

Equipment issues related to operational effectiveness or safety compliance must also be identified and dealt with before a consolidation takes place. Self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) will require mask fit testing and training on use based on manufacturer and model type. If the agencies involved in consolidation efforts operate with different types of SCBA, a plan must be developed to solve any discrepancies. An audit for fire apparatus issues such as hose types, loads, and fittings sizes should also be conducted before crews operate in joint responses.

There are many issues that are minor in nature and can be corrected over time as the consolidated agency becomes established. Apparatus types and inventories as well as equipment manufacturer and models used can be addressed by integration groups made up of labor and management members (P. Donovan, personal communication, June 22, 2010).

Communication issues can be complicated during consolidation efforts if common frequencies, equipment types, and dispatch facilities do not exist. Transmission and tower coverage will need to be considered as well as communication policies. If consolidating agencies operate from two completely separate systems, converting operations into one common system will be a major issue. Today communications also commonly involves computer added dispatch and the transfer of data into a record management system. Critical data used for decision making and documentation of responses can be compromised and unreliable if systems are not properly set up. Dispatch and communications with field units during responses potentially have a firefighter safety concern if units are moving between dispatch centers or frequencies (K. Wright, personal communication, June 22, 2010).

The main workload of consolidation efforts rests on the upper level managers and staff as agencies work through the process (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 18). All chief officers interviewed agreed that this tended to be true for their organizations. They recognized that the distribution of work into areas of related department operations was important when developing a work plan for individuals. When working on the overall operational plan for a consolidation; shared workloads, utilizing subject matter expertise in specific areas, task forces made up of labor and management, and the willingness of the organizations involved to accept change are all important (E. Goodlet, personal communication, June 15, 2010).

The second research question asked “What are the emergency response considerations of a consolidation?” When considering emergency response and the impacts that a consolidation may have on it, a baseline or starting point is required to look at it from. When addressing service level expectations within a community, a number of different methodologies for measurement exist. The range of definitions for service level is somewhat subjective with both the literature review and chief officer interviews finding a number of methods used. At a simple level, a community considering consolidation may move forward with the process based on a promised increase with a defined service such as ALS being added to the community. At a more complicated level, communities may be interested in a detailed break down of services delivered within both communities before and following a consolidation (E. Goodlet, personal communication, June 15, 2010). Each individual community typically sets the level of expectation through its existing fire department administrations, elected officials, and eventual participation in a ballot measure.

The two most defined methods for determining the level of services found in the literature review are the Washington State RCW 52.33 on service level objectives and the CFAI SOC process. In Washington State, an RCW was placed into law in 2007 that requires substantially career fire departments to set and report on service level objectives on an annual basis. The legislature was attempting to define levels of service in individual jurisdictions with a common reporting method statewide (Access Washington website, 2010). This service level and reporting requirement requires the same information and reporting methods for all departments in the state that fall under this RCW and, therefore, provides a reasonable method to compare services delivered within communities considering consolidation. The CFAI SOC document covers a significant number of areas that directly relate to how emergency services are delivered

in a community. The definition of an SOC from CFAI is “Standards of response coverage are defined as those written policies and procedures that establish the distribution and concentration of fixed and mobile resources of an organization”. Looking specifically at the individual components of an SOC document, it can be broken out into the following major areas: identifying community risks, identifying community expectations of service levels, distribution and concentration of resources, system reliability, and baseline reporting of performance (CPSE, 2006, p. 47). The SOC process not only defines levels of service provided to a community, it breaks down the methodology of the decision making process for that service delivery in a way that would help communities compare services when considering consolidation. What ever method of defining services provided to a community both before and after a consolidation is used, the communities need a comparison that is defined and understandable to them. A common theme heard and expected by most communities is “equitable or better service” when considering a consolidation (W. Senter, personal communication, April 13, 2010).

The issue of agency established dispatch criteria and fire ground staffing directly affect emergency operations. Consolidating agencies need to identify and address discrepancies between their individual operations before consolidation. Numbers of personnel and apparatus utilized for different types of incidents need to be clarified and established to provide safe and effective operations. While significantly affected by agency finances, the NFPA provides direction in this area that would help establish a goal for future improvement (National Fire Protection Association website, 2010). Fire ground procedures or tactics utilized in the delivery of services also need to be addressed as an early priority during consolidations. The importance of a common operations plan and procedures in the field is paramount. This was recognized as one of the most significant areas to address and required the direct oversight and involvement

from the chief of the department for the consolidated agency (J. Walkowski, personal communication, June 22, 2010).

The third research question asks “Within SKFR and the BFD, what are the administrative concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation?” Interviews conducted with chief officers from both SKFR and BFD identified a number of administrative concerns. With SKFR and BFD being neighboring agencies and historically working under many common county standards, major concerns about tools and equipment are limited. There are, however, a number of smaller yet potentially significant concerns relating to interoperability with the two agencies. Apparatus design and capability, the use of different types of firefighting foams, and the tools and equipment utilized in Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) deployment will need to be looked at (D. Richards, personal communication, June 17, 2010). Other potential equipment issues include the need to provide all personnel in the consolidated agency with two sets of firefighting turnout gear as well as the need to assure all personal issued SCBA masks work with all models of SCBA currently utilized within the consolidating agencies (A. Duke, personal communication, June 16, 2010).

In the area relating to labor management relations, there are a number of concerns that affect the consolidation efforts with SKFR and BFD. Concerns that will be addressed under the rules of impact bargaining include: performance expectations, personnel policies, wage and benefit packages, job descriptions, and grievance and discipline procedures (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 70). It is important to work through these issues in a structured process with labor management meetings. Key issues such as the collective bargaining agreements must be dealt with up front. On many of the lesser issues, task forces representing all parties can be established

to find solutions as the new agency grows together (D. Richards, personal communication, June 17, 2010).

Currently both SKFR and BFD operate with a common county dispatch center and have common frequencies and procedures related to this area. Each agency is divided into service zones and has deployment of resources that are based on preset criteria. A comparison of methodologies used in these areas will need to be completed. Each agency dispatches resources based on different factors and a consolidation will provide an opportunity to evaluate and expand or improve in these areas. New run cards and deployments will need to be created to modify numbers of units dispatched to specific incidents and responses into the shared border area will need to be modified following consolidation (J. Gudmundsen, personal communication, June 21, 2010). When looking at the deployment of resources, a common method will need to be developed for the breakdown of fire ground critical tasking for significant incidents. SKFR's SOC has a methodology for this process that could be expanded or modified to serve the new agency (SKFR, 2010, p. 68).

As a new agency is developed, a review of work assignments made to line personnel will need to be undertaken due to overlap in processes and lack of similar methods between the two agencies. Each agency has line officers overseeing different aspects of operational projects ranging from prefire planning, equipment inventory and maintenance, to SCBA repair and upkeep. Each of these will need to be examined and, with growth in the organization and labor management agreement, moved to staff positions where appropriate (A. Duke, personal communication, June 16, 2010).

A final concern identified for this research question involved the use of incident command procedures, battalion chief responsibilities, and the expansion to two shift battalion

chiefs on duty. While Kitsap County has a common adopted incident management program in place, different agencies utilize it at various levels. There would be a need to address response culture in this area and the use of the program as designed by the county committee. It may involve multi company drills and the regular practice and application of the adopted standard (J. Gudmundsen, personal communication, June 21, 2010). The division of response areas into two equitable areas shared between two battalion chiefs as well as administrative work assignments will need to be completed. Opportunities exist for shared responses on larger incidents to provide safety officer and staff support as well as the ability to organize additional resources and district coverage during times when one battalion chief is committed to an incident (D. Richards, personal communication, June 17, 2010).

Information for the fourth research question was gained from a questionnaire sent to labor representatives from both SKFR and BFD. Numerical scoring of the questions is graphed and available (Appendix D) which provides a level or rating of significance to the membership in this form. Written answers to each question were also requested and responses were utilized to summarize the following in regards to personnel concerns regarding operational consolidation from the membership of SKFR and BFD. Highest on all responses and an area that broadly touches many aspects of labors concerns is maintaining current compensation and benefit packages. Joining together two collective bargaining agreements with the equitable treatment of all members through the process is a concern that touches on many operational areas due to the impacts on working conditions. Labor laws in Washington State through RCW 49 (Access Washington website, 2010) direct much of this process, yet rely on good labor management relations to truly be successful. Membership from both SKFR and BFD rely on both the labor

regulations and the labor management process to provide security in this area during the consolidation process.

Employee concerns about minimum apparatus staffing and the distribution and concentration of the workforce across the new agency also brought a strong response from the membership of both SKFR and BFD. Each labor group had concerns about moving or losing staffing into the other response agency's area, yet recognized the need to provide the best possible coverage for the citizens. One employee's concern brought forward was the potential effect of staffing on overall responder safety. Several responses were directed to the need for a structured process to distribute personnel throughout the agency and mentioned the use of the CFAI SOC process which provides a nationally recognized methodology. Both labor groups realized that as the agency establishes itself in the first few years, response demands and community growth will drive future deployment of resources beyond the initial starting place.

Leadership for the consolidated agency will initially come from current staffing of chief officers within the two separate agencies. Labor representatives had two areas of concern relating to agency leadership. First was the need to have processes in place that allowed the best qualified members to fill positions appropriate with their abilities. The second was to find a balance of chief officers representing the new agency that came equitably from the two pre consolidated agencies. Labor felt strongly that good communications on processes that defined who will fill chief officer positions as well as early communications on proposed organizational structures were important in this area. Comments were made about the critical nature of employee respect of the officers in charge and a clear understanding of each individual's qualifications for the positions they were selected to fill.

The combining of two established workforces brought forward concerns about employee seniority and its impacts on employee's selection processes and job opportunities. Each agency maintains a current list of employee's seniority for both date of hire and promotions. Both labor groups felt that the agencies were similar enough in scope to justify a simple merging of agency lists to form a consolidated list for the new agency. Similar thoughts were shared on the work schedule and daily routine that the new agency would utilize. It was felt that working through the labor management process, the new agency would need to establish a daily routine that would meet the needs of the agency yet be mindful of the sensitive nature of this area to the employees.

New employee hiring and existing employee promotional testing processes also brought several responses from the labor groups. Concerns about new hires related directly to quality of individuals and capacity to do the work. Promotional testing had a higher level of concern based on its impacts on the current membership and the future leadership of the agency. Promotional testing procedures for the consolidated agency would potentially be different from the testing completed at SKFR and BFD in the past. Labor shared concerns about the nature and scope of testing procedures. The needed preparation time and clearly defined expectations as well as a sense of fairness would allow members from both agencies to compete on an equal level.

Lastly, an area that any consolidation of agencies has to deal with is the integration of the workforces into a common new agency. Labor has concerns about the impact on employees and their preferences to work in familiar settings, yet they recognize the need to eventually incorporate agencies into one. Concerns about safety, district familiarization, and employee morale were shared. It was generally recognized that labor felt this will be a significant labor management topic that would be resolved over time as the new agency grew together.

### Discussion

The literature review identified issues that typically arise during consolidation efforts in a broad sense. The need to define issues that were applicable to this ARP and the departments involved were accomplished with the research conducted. Consolidation efforts for the American Fire Service are affected by many different issues such as regional concerns, department demographics, and state level regulations to name a few. The research conducted for this ARP helped define what specific issues were concerns for the administrations and labor leaders within both SKFR and BFD. The interviews conducted with outside agencies that had worked through consolidations were informative and helped frame the nature of the problems encountered to the specific situations of the departments involved in the consolidation effort.

With the outside agencies and the chief officers interviewed to identify problems others experienced during the consolidation process, several were noted that were applicable to the SKFR and BFD consolidation. The need for an open and communicative labor management relationship to work through issues and keep problems from escalating will be important. This issue is identified by Snook and Johnson (1997) and was clearly validated during the research as having been important with all agencies interviewed. SKFR and BFD both recognize the need for a collaborative labor management process to deal with issues related to the consolidation.

The interviews identified the importance of the timely developing or merging of operating polices for the consolidated agency to operate within. This is a complex issue that must be addressed to avoid confusion and get the new agency working from a common set of procedures. Dividing this process into manageable pieces and prioritizing where the efforts are placed will involve both labor and management. There are policies that must be drafted and implemented at the start of any consolidation for safe and efficient operations. Human resource

and emergency operations were identified in this group (J. Walkowski, personal communication, June 22, 2010). Many other policies can be addressed over time and have a less pressing impact on the agencies initial operations. Equipment and communications compatibility were mentioned as significant issues in several of the agencies interviewed. When looking at these issues within SKFR and BFD, they are minor in scope and showed the compatibility of these two agencies having worked from a common dispatch and communications system and under many common county equipment and fire ground procedures.

The interviews conducted with outside agencies also supported the literature review in the area where much of the workload of implementing the processes of consolidating agencies fall in the agency staff. The literature review found the main workload of consolidation efforts rests on the upper level managers and staff as agencies work through the process (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 18). It was agreed upon by all chief officers interviewed that this tended to be true for their organizations. It was recommended that the distribution of the work into areas of related department operations was important when developing a work plan for individuals and to recognize the need to distribute workload out as evenly as possible.

Defining service level objectives and the scope of the services delivered by an agency to the community found several different methods and a somewhat less than consistent approach within the agencies interviewed. Individual communities each have expectations of service although a common approach was not readily found in defining that level of service. Chief Ron Coleman clearly identifies the importance of defining issues around the level of service provided (Coleman, 2006, p. 446). The literature review found the State of Washington has RCW 52.33 which provides a defined and required method for fire agencies to report levels of service to the community served (Access Washington website, 2010). This RCW or the CFAI SOC

methodology (CPSE, 2008) provides a logical and structured approach to defining services delivered to a community. Operationally, a need clearly exists for defining services delivered both before and following a consolidation to establish and validate improvements and value to the communities involved. Either of these methods, the RCW or the CFAI SOC, appears to provide a valid definable method to accomplish this goal.

From the administrations of both SKFR and BFD, only modest concerns exist regarding consolidation on operational issues. Interviews with chief officers from both agencies supported the concept that agencies with common operations, procedures, and the sharing of joint operations where possible before a consolidation are more likely to be successful coming together. These issues should normally be looked into during a “feasibility stage” when considering the merits of consolidation between departments (Snook & Johnson, 1997, p. 60). SKFR and BFD have many pieces in place that would lead to success in consolidation on operational issues. Common operational areas include: county training manual including hose evolutions, communications center and radio frequencies, emergency medical program director, base station and protocols, records management system, involvement in joint training facility located between agencies, employee shift work schedule, county incident management procedures, mutual and automatic aid agreements, county technical rescue team membership, and disaster preparation and area command operations in conjunction with Kitsap County Department of Emergency Management. With the significant amount of common operations already in place between SKFR and BFD, opportunities for a successful consolidation of operations clearly exist. With the consolidation of SKFR and BFD, improvements to operational service delivery due to efficiencies could be seen in the areas of depth of firefighter staffing, fire command and scene safety, closest unit response, and fireground critical tasking.

The questionnaires returned by the labor representatives from both SKFR and BFD placed emphasis on several areas identified in the literature review as typically being important with the labor groups involved in consolidations. Two of the areas received high levels of concern and related directly to the group of seven identified as significant workforce concerns related to consolidations (Mazza, 2007, p. 20). These two areas consisted of maintaining current compensation and benefits and assignment of the agencies leadership, both the chief officer levels and the overall chief of the organization. Labor representatives were concerned about equal distribution of chief level positions to members from both original agencies and emphasized the importance of the best qualified members being placed into the key leadership positions.

The labor groups also have concerns about the movement of their membership as the new agency staffs stations as a single or new agency. These concerns relate to losses if staffing from one community moves to the other, adequate staffing for safe operations, and the movement of personnel to stations they are not interested in moving to. These concerns somewhat mirror findings from the management interviews relating to methods for conducting a safe and effective transition as the consolidation takes place and becomes established in the first years. This is clearly a significant labor management topic that all consolidating agencies have worked through. A well communicated, scheduled, and systematic approach will need to be developed to meet the needs of both labor and management until the transition into a single agency happens at the line level.

These personnel concerns represent issues that need to be dealt with in order for a consolidation to move ahead due to their overall importance to the membership in both organizations. Human resource issues and the manner in which they are dealt with through labor

management are clearly critical for the success of any consolidation (Snook & Johnson, 1997, Chapter 8).

The finding of this ARP and the implications relevant to both SKFR and BFD if a consolidation were to take place clearly show two organizations well suited for consolidation of agency operations. Common areas of operations based on the history of Kitsap County fire service cooperation on numerous issues has helped establish this situation. Based off the outside agencies interviewed and the information gained from the literature review, SKFR and the BFD have no major operational issues that would unreasonably challenge the consolidation process.

#### Recommendations

Based on the information gathered for this ARP, the author recommends the following points for consideration in the consolidation process of agency operations for SKFR and the BFD:

1. Continue with current levels of involvement with labor management and openly recognize that the maintenance of strong labor management relations is required for success of any consolidation effort. This labor management relationship directly touches on labor's concerns about maintaining current compensation, benefits, and working conditions during collective bargaining agreement development for the consolidated agency. The need exists to involve key stakeholders for study or task force groups to work on individual operational issues as the agencies are joined together. The membership of these study or task force groups should represent both labor and management at appropriate levels for the subject being studied. The consolidation of separate agencies into one will require subject matter experts who have a background and understanding of processes and procedures utilized in the original agencies. When developing these groups, a breakdown of work priority should be established with key

emergency scene and human resource issues being addressed first. Beyond these key issues, the recognition that many areas of operations could be worked on after the initial consolidation has taken place, allows for a natural development of the new agency with input and ownership from the stakeholder groups.

2. Equipment compatibility and employee familiarity for operational use should be considered before any consolidation takes place. Some issues will need to be dealt with initially for safety or compliance concerns. Many other issues can be directed to the study or task force groups for future change. SCBA types including personal issue masks and accountability system interface, fire hose, tools, equipment compatibility, and fire apparatus driver operator requirements are amongst the issues that should be addressed early. Longer term changes relating to individual apparatus inventories and equipment placement, apparatus specifications and color, and personal issued gear can be managed over time. When staffing the consolidated agency, awareness of crew familiarity with facilities, apparatus, equipment, and station response areas should be considered. Most agencies interviewed developed a transition process where for an initial period, one or more of the membership from the original crew was kept in the station, both for operational efficiencies and the training of new membership as they rotated in.

3. Development of specific standard operating procedures for the consolidated agency to operate under should be undertaken before any consolidation is put into effect. Many important areas must be addressed initially in the areas of emergency scene operations, human resource management, and collective bargaining related topics. SKFR and the BFD have many common county operating procedures in place currently for emergency scene operations. A review of how well each agency is adhering to these practices as written and command level training in joint operations should be considered. Labor and management committees will need to address the

human resource and collective bargaining issues in order for management, supervisors, and the employee group to understand the expectations placed on them in the consolidated agency.

4. There is a need to define levels of service delivered to the communities involved in the consolidation. The author recommends a comparison of reports generated under the Washington State RCW that requires substantially career fire departments to report service levels to the community annually. Once levels of service are defined on an equal scale, an updating of the SKFR SOC document incorporating the BFD jurisdiction should be completed. The SOC document updated to reflect the new consolidated agency would provide a roadmap for deployment of resources and a definable model for all members of the department and community to use in understanding what levels of service their fire department is providing. In conjunction with the updating of the SOC, a risk assessment process will need to be overlaid on the City of Bremerton to help define risks and draw conclusions for the SOC update. The SKFR risk assessment procedures are current and could be assigned to staff early in the consolidation.

5. The distribution of work in the new agency and the appointment of chief officers to lead the consolidated agency are a significant concern with labor. Recognition of this concern by senior staff and open communications on these issues through labor management will be important. Appointment of chief officers for the consolidated agency should provide transparency into the selection process yet follow a defined and predictable course based on recognized industry standards. The author identified an underlying conflict in this area where the labor groups want the most qualified members to fill leadership positions in the consolidated agency. This approach conflicts with a desire to have officers from their original agencies involved in the leadership of the consolidated agency to help protect their interests during its formation. Some level of equitable distribution of positions should be considered in the process.

The consolidation of SKFR and the BFD will create a new larger organization that will require a review of work distribution to line personnel. Practices that worked on a smaller scale with the original two agencies may not be appropriate for the consolidated agency. Working through labor management, decisions will need to be made relating to work completed by line personnel and the need to move some of this work into staff functions. Some processes from the past may not be practical in the larger agency. Shift personnel maintaining specific levels of equipment or apparatus and supply or uniform distribution are two issues that will need to be addressed.

The research conducted for this ARP clearly finds that SKFR and the BFD are well matched for consolidation of agency operations. Kitsap County Fire Services have a history of common methodology and joint operations in many operational areas. SKFR and the BFD have added to these common areas with additional efforts on shared operations through automatic aid and common programs. Consolidation of operations with SKFR and the BFD will provide efficiencies with agency operations and allow for increased levels of service to the communities served through depth of staffing, common deployments, and economies of scale. No significant or overwhelming obstacles were identified that would prohibit a successful consolidation of operations between SKFR and the BFD.

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## Appendix A

Structured interview questions external interviews.

The intention of this interview process is to gain information and insight from other comparable agencies that have participated in recent consolidations. Specific information relating to research questions one and two listed below is the focus of this interview.

1. What operational implementation problems have other agencies identified when consolidating organizations of comparable departments?
2. What are the emergency response considerations of a consolidation?

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Department demographics.** Briefly give an overview of your two agencies before consolidation and after.
2. **Equipment.** Apparatus, inventory carried on units, SCBA, etc. What were the impacts of consolidation on these types of issues and what methods were used to correct differences?
3. **Communications emergency dispatch.** Was there a common methodology, frequencies, and dispatch provider before consolidation? What were the impacts of consolidation on these issues and what methods were used to correct differences?
4. **Daily routine.** What was the general routine followed for the workday and the types of duties completed by agencies before consolidation? What were the impacts of consolidation on these issues and what methods were used to correct differences?
5. **Department integration.** What issues existed and what methods were used to bring the separate agency employees into the consolidated agency's operations?

6. **Policy development.** What method was utilized to determine and implement policies and procedures for the new agency?
7. **Seniority and shift assignment.** What were the impacts of consolidation on issues relating to employee seniority, station assignment, and leave selection? What methods were used to implement change?
8. **Service levels defined.** What method was used to compare service levels provided to the citizens before consolidation and what process was used for setting new service levels and corresponding deployment of resources following consolidation?
9. **Prefire info, MCT data.** Were there similar programs and how did you align responder response information in the consolidated agency?
10. **Records management system.** What methods were utilized to bring about common data collection and a records management system for the consolidated agency?
11. **Incident management system and fire ground procedures.** What method was utilized to bring the consolidated agency into common delivery and compliance with industry standard practices in these areas?
12. **Workload of consolidation process.** Were there specific impacts on various positions or personnel during the process of consolidation?
13. **Anything else relevant to the topic.** Areas not covered in the previous questions that were significant issues during your consolidation process?

## Appendix B

Structured interview questions internal interviews.

The intention of this interview process is to gain information and insight from the administrative membership of both SKFR and BFD. Specific information relating to research question three listed below is the focus of this interview. The nature of this question related directly to operational concerns from the administrations of the agencies involved in consolidation.

3. Within South Kitsap Fire Rescue and the Bremerton Fire Department, what are the administrative concerns regarding operational impacts of consolidation?

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Person interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Equipment.** Apparatus, inventory carried on units, SCBA, defibrillators, etc. What are your concerns relating to the potential consolidation with BFD and SKFR in this area?

2. **Daily routine.** General routine followed for the workday. What are your agencies current practices? What are your concerns with the types of duties and routines used by the agencies before consolidation and after?

3. **Policy development.** What are your concerns relating to the potential consolidation with BFD and SKFR in this area and how do you foresee dealing with this issue?

4. **Service levels defined and deployment methodology.** What method is used by your agency to determine the service levels provided to the community and the process for determining deployment of resources?

5. **Department integration.** What are your thoughts about a methodology for integration of separate agency employees into a consolidated agency's operations?

6. **Workload distribution to line level officer.** What are your current practices in this area and what thoughts do you have relating to this area in a consolidated agency?
7. **Prefire info, MCT data.** What is the current status of the prefire program in your department and what, if any, specific responder response information do you utilize and think will be of value in the consolidated agency?
8. **Risk assessment procedures.** What programs or methods are utilized for risk assessment data collection in your agency?
9. **Incident management system and fire ground procedures.** What issues, in this area outside of the current Kitsap County practices, do you feel will be a concern with a consolidated agency?
10. **Anything else relevant to the topic.** Are there any areas not covered in the previous questions that you think may be a significant issue involving the consolidation process?

Appendix C

**Labor leadership organizational questionnaire**

The following statements relate to personnel concerns regarding potential operational impacts of consolidation. Each statement has a numerical ranking of 1 to 10 on a scale of overall importance to the member completing the questionnaire, a ranking of 1 reflecting a low level of concern with a ranking of 10 reflecting the highest level of concern. You may use the same scale number more than once. Each statement also has a section for providing additional details following the numerical ranking instrument.



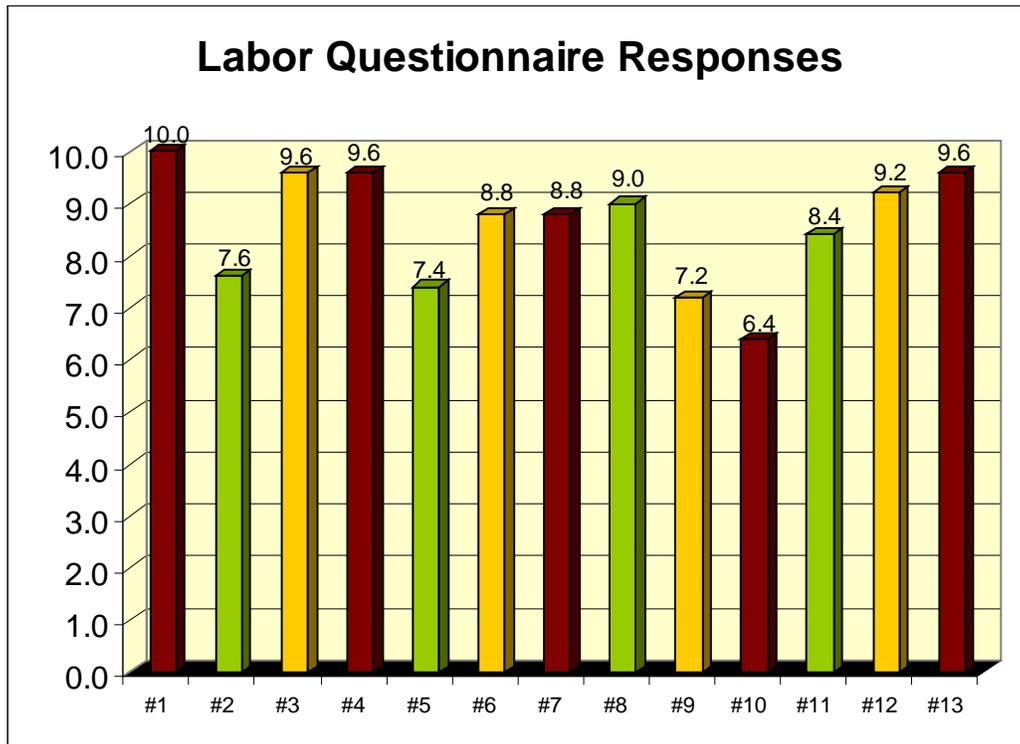
Scale	Statement
<p>_____</p>	<p>Maintaining current compensation, benefits and the process of CBA development during consolidation.</p> <p>Explain:</p>
<p>_____</p>	<p>Parity of minimum apparatus staffing, current distribution, and concentration of workforce during consolidation.</p> <p>Explain:</p>
<p>_____</p>	<p>Method utilized for assignment of new chief officer positions in the consolidated agency.</p> <p>Explain:</p>

<p>Method utilized for assignment of the agency chief position in the consolidated agency.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain:</p>
<p>Integration of membership seniority in the consolidated agency.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain:</p>
<p>Work hours and shift schedules utilized in the consolidated agency.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain:</p>
<p>Workload distribution to line personnel, i.e. specialty projects or areas of responsibility assigned to officers or subject matter experts.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain:</p>

_____	Daily routine established for the consolidated agency, i.e. wellness, training, inspections, maintenance, etc.
	Explain:
_____	Individual employee's ability to deal with changes in "turf" or "culture" as it relates to our inherent territorial interests and issues or methods we have grown accustomed to.
	Explain:
_____	New member hiring practices and probation requirements established for the consolidated agency.
	Explain:
_____	Method utilized to integrate agency personnel throughout the consolidated agency.
	Explain:

<p>Promotional testing procedures utilized in the consolidated agency.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain:</p>
<p>Employee concerns about consolidated agency leadership being selected for reasons other than competency and character.</p> <hr/> <p>Explain:</p>

Appendix D



1. Maintaining current compensation, benefits and the process of CBA development during consolidation.
2. Parity of minimum apparatus staffing, current distribution, and concentration of workforce during consolidation.
3. Method utilized for assignment of new chief officer positions in the consolidated agency.
4. Method utilized for assignment of the agency chief position in the consolidated agency.
5. Integration of membership seniority in the consolidated agency.
6. Work hours and shift schedules utilized in the consolidated agency.
7. Workload distribution to line personnel, i.e. specialty projects or areas of responsibility assigned to officers or subject matter experts.
8. Daily routine established for the consolidated agency, i.e. wellness, training, inspections, maintenance, etc.
9. Individual employee's ability to deal with changes in "turf" or "culture" as it relates to our inherent territorial interests and issues or methods we have grown accustomed to.
10. New member hiring practices and probation requirements established for the consolidated agency.
11. Method utilized to integrate agency personnel throughout the consolidated agency.
12. Promotional testing procedures utilized in the consolidated agency.
13. Employee concerns about consolidated agency leadership being selected for reasons other than competency and character.