

# Memorandum



**Date:** August 7, 2014

**To:** Honorable Chairwoman Rebeca Sosa  
And Members, Board of County Commissioners

**From:** Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor 

**Subject:** Alternative Firefighter Staffing Models (Directive 140483)

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The following information is being provided in response to Resolution R-350-14 adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on April 8, 2014 directing the Administration to study alternatives to the 24 hour firefighting/paramedic duty schedule and to evaluate the feasibility of implementing an alternative work schedule in the Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department (MDFR).

Research indicates there are three (3) basic types of shift schedules to cover a 24-hour period. These include:

- 24-hour schedule;
- Split shift such as the 10/14-hour schedule;
- Three platoon 8-hour shift.

While the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Center for Public Safety Management, in numerous evaluations of fire-rescue services, speaks to a 12-hour schedule, the schedule has been reserved for additional "peak load" service rather than an alternative to the current 24-hour schedule.

Both the 10/14-hour split shift and the 8-hour shift would require additional personnel to be hired to staff another entire platoon of personnel, (4 shifts) as well as, hiring of additional relief employees. Additionally, both of these configurations increase the likelihood that additional overtime costs would be incurred during shift changes. Because units must be staffed 24/7 with the same number of personnel, every time a shift change occurs, twice in 24 hours on the split shift and three times in 24 hours on the 8-hour shift, late calls and holdover for personnel coming from another assignment is more commonplace.

Regardless of the shift, minimum staffing requirements, established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) must be adhered to 24 hours a day. NFPA 1710 *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*, which is the consensus standard used by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, bases its number of personnel required to effectively manage an incident on type of hazard and occupancy rather than time of day. As an example, in order to comply with NFPA 1710, fire companies must be staffed with a minimum of 4 personnel and all companies must arrive within 8 minutes, 90% of the time. For a "typical" 2,000 square foot residence, NFPA 1710 requires a minimum of 15 personnel to arrive to meet the standard. MDFR responds with a total of 16 personnel to these types of occupancies: [3 Suppression (12 personnel); 1 Rescue (3 personnel); 1 Battalion (1 person)].

While there may be a perception that the 24-hour shift is inefficient and non-productive, there is no conclusive research that this is in fact true. A productivity study conducted by the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officers Program revealed that there were no additional benefits from any

alternate schedule as non-emergency work did not occur after 10:00 PM regardless of the work schedule. While the 10/14-hour schedule revealed benefits to reducing fatigue by reducing the hours worked, the body's biological clock is disrupted by the rotating schedule. There are also variations to the 24-hour shift. However most agree, the 24/48-hour configuration we currently have allows for the best balance between work and recovery. There is also an option to further reduce the hours worked by adding an additional platoon of personnel and reducing the workweek from 48 hours to 42 hours; although this would not be a good financial decision considering the budget challenges we continue to face.

The current 24/48 hour shift allows for only one (1) exchange of personnel per day. This limits the possibility of additional overtime costs associated with late calls (running past the end of the shift) or holdovers waiting for other personnel to report from another assignment, as well as, allows staffing levels to remain in accordance with nationally accepted standards. While there are opportunities to look at how many people are allowed off per shift and how that impacts relief and overtime needs, the 24/48 hour shift is the most appropriate work schedule to cover our service 24 hours a day.

It is also important to note that Article 27 of our current Collective Bargaining Agreement with IAFF Local #1403 provides for personnel assigned in Operations to work a 24-hour shift and any change must be negotiated.

If you have any further questions, please contact Fire Chief Dave Downey, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, at 786-331-5118.

c: Robert A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney  
Russell Benford, Deputy Mayor  
David Downey, Fire Chief, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Department  
Jennifer Moon, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor  
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