

4.0 Budgets

Understanding how much districts pay for providing service is an important component of the fire service delivery system. It also forms a basis of comparison with other fire agencies.

4.1 Comparative Budgets

Table 4.1 presents an overview of fire protection costs (total expenditures) of six towns in New York State. Selection of towns for comparison with the Town of Bethlehem’s fire departments was based on two factors: similar areas (square miles) and populations served.

Table 4.1: Fire districts with similar budgets as the Town of Bethlehem Fire District

Town	County	Area (sq. mi.)	Population	Fire Protection Agencies	Expenditures
Cicero	Onondaga	48.5	27,982	5	\$2,251,982
Manlius	Onondaga	49.6	31,872	4	\$2,891,949
Clarence	Erie	53.4	26,132	6	\$3,591,439
East Fishkill	Dutchess	56.9	25,589	1	\$3,612,185
Bethlehem	Albany	48.8	31,304	5	\$3,715,799
Newburgh	Orange	43.7	27,568	5	\$3,781,304
Clifton Park	Saratoga	48.6	32,995	6	\$4,434,777

Table 4.1, “Fire Protection Agencies” lists the total number of entities which provide fire protection in each town. According to New York State law, towns are not allowed to provide fire protection as a municipal function. Instead, fire protection is provided either by a fire district or through creation of a fire protection district. A **fire district** is a separate unit of government, run by elected commissioners and has the authority to levy property taxes for the purpose of providing fire services. A **fire protection district** is a geographic service area within a town, established for the purpose of fire protection. Towns contract for fire protection services within a **fire protection district** at the expense of the property owners in that district. The contract for fire services may be with a city or village fire department, a fire district, or an independent fire company. The boundaries of a fire district or a fire *protection* district do not necessarily follow the same boundaries of the established town. Some districts may encompass several towns. Therefore, multiple agencies can be established to provide towns with fire services.

To illustrate this point, the East Fishkill Fire District encompasses the Town of East Fishkill and provides fire protection. On the other hand, the Town of Clarence is provided with fire protection services from six agencies—five fire protection districts (Clarence Center, Rapids, Swormville, East Amherst and Harris Hills) and one fire district (Clarence #1). Fire protection entities in the Town of Cicero are more diverse, with two fire districts (Brewerton and Cicero), the Village of North Syracuse Fire Department, and two independent fire companies—South Bay Fire Company and Bridgeport Fire Company.

Table 4.1, “Expenditures” is a computation of expenses for the year 2009. Total expenditures for this time period was limited to financial data reported to the New York State Office of the State Comptroller (OSC)³ as well as available town, village and fire district budgets of the referenced towns. Manitou, Inc. analyzed this data and used it to assign a total cost of fire protection (expenditures). For example, the \$3,612,185 spent by the East Fishkill Fire District is the amount submitted to and published by the OSC. The 2009 budget for the Town of Clarence provided funding of \$2,305,300 for the five fire protection districts covering the town. Total expenditures submitted to the OSC by the Clarence No.1 Fire District were \$1,286,139. The amount budgeted by the town plus the district costs yields total expenditures for 2009 of \$3,591,439. The Town of Cicero budgeted \$1,382,743 for the five fire protection agencies covering the town. Additional costs of the two fire districts (Brewerton and Cicero) and the expenditures budgeted by the Village of North Syracuse put the total cost at \$2,251,982. Similarly, the 2009 budget for the Town of Clifton Park provided funds totaling \$2,832,719 for the six fire districts protecting the town. Total expenditures reported to OSC by the individual fire districts (Jonesville, Ballston Lake, Clifton/Halfmoon, West Crescent, Rexford and Vischer Ferry) totaled \$4,434,777.

On a per capita basis, the expenditures are listed in Table 4.2 below. Bethlehem falls in the mid-range by this measure. Given the large amount of industrial property in the Town, these figures illustrate that costs are in line with other parts of the state.

Table 4.2: Per capita cost by town

Town	Per Capita Cost
Cicero	\$80.48
Manlius	\$90.74
Clarence	\$137.43
East Fishkill	\$141.16
Bethlehem	\$118.70
Newburgh	\$137.16
Clifton Park	\$134.41

This cost comparison is for informational purposes only and is not intended to rank or rate the cost of fire protection in the Town of Bethlehem with respect to similar towns. Depending on capital purchase policies, cost of expenditures for individual districts can fluctuate widely from year to year. Additionally, Manitou, Inc. did not verify the data provided to the OSC. Finally, because the OSC does not publish data that provides populations or square miles protected by district, it limits the ability to draw strong conclusions based on their information alone.

The \$3,715,799 expenditure listed under the Town of Bethlehem represents the total amount budgeted by the five fire districts for the year 2009. Whether fire protection is a municipal

³ Office of the New York State Comptroller, “Local government and school accountability: Financial data: Data for local governments.” http://osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/findata/index_choice.htm (25 September 2011).

function (city or village fire department), provided by an autonomous fire district, or by contract with an independent fire company, the end result is the same—equipment, facilities, operating expenses, and dedicated personnel are organized to provide service to the citizens of the defined protection area. As highlighted in this comparison, one agency or multiple agencies can be organized to achieve this goal.

According to the OSC report entitled *Financial Report on Fire Districts*,⁴ the breakdown of budget expenditures is shown in Table 4.3, below.

Table 4.3: Breakdown of fire district expenditures by purpose, New York State

Current operations (salaries, benefits and contractual expenditures)	62%
Equipment and capital outlay	30%
Debt services	8%

The report notes, “This distribution of expenditures has been consistent over the past decade, and reflects the capital-intensive nature of providing fire protection and emergency medical services.” A summary of district finances reveals total expenditures increased by 36.1 percent between 2000 and 2005. The percent change between the years 1995 to 2005 was 60.9 percent.

The budget figures submitted by the five districts in the Town of Bethlehem for the years covering 2005 to 2010 are listed in Table 4.4. The last line shows the percent budget increase for this time period.

⁴ Office of the State Comptroller, Division of Local Government and School Accountability. “Financial report on fire districts: Fiscal years ended 2005.” <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/finfire.pdf>. (25 September 2011).

Table 4.4: Town of Bethlehem Fire District expenditures, 2005-2010

	Delmar	Elsmere	Elmwood Park	Slingerlands	Selkirk
2005	\$739,400	\$739,632	\$429,187	\$380,795	\$612,910
2006	\$787,300	\$675,000	\$464,566	\$385,770	\$754,255
2007	\$845,450	\$709,635	\$458,825	\$371,599	\$404,170
2008	\$988,454	\$784,000	\$522,630	\$384,825	\$807,650
2009	\$960,690	\$878,249	\$518,035	\$431,500	\$927,325
2010	\$974,470	\$864,902	\$538,801	\$433,500	\$959,425
Percent Change 2005-2010	31%	17%	25%	13%	56%

Examination of the Selkirk Fire District budget shows a significant increase in three items categorized under Administration, which led to the highest increase in expenditures (with respect to the other districts). In 2005 total administration costs were \$303,300 and in 2010 total administration costs were \$497,500, an increase of \$194,200. This increase can be attributed to increased capital costs. For instance, during this time, capital reserve funds increased from \$202,000 to \$270,000 (an increase of \$68,000); LOSAP increased from \$65,000 to \$150,000 (an increase of \$85,000); worker’s compensation increased from \$28,000 to \$60,000 (an increase of \$32,000). As noted, the average increase in costs by fire districts across New York State from 2000-2005 was 36.1 percent. The Delmar, Slingerlands, Elsmere and North Bethlehem/Elmwood Park Fire Departments were all below this average. The 31 percent increase for Delmar was the closest to this average. A review of the Delmar Fire Department’s budget reveals two items which have added to the increase: insurance increased from \$150,000 to \$238,050, (an increase of 78,050) and reserve fund contributions increased from \$150,000 to \$190,000 (an increase of \$40,000).

A common theme during the interview of district commissioners was the tough economic climate and the fiscal realities of “holding the line” on spending. Charged with running the district, commissioners are also taxpayers. When asked “*What are your expectations for the study?*” most of the answers focused on improving services in a manner which would be cost-effective for all the districts with little impact on the taxpayers. Some of the ideas offered targeted joint or group purchases as means of saving money. Other comments were broader in scope, looking towards sharing or combining overall services that would not have a negative impact on the District.

4.2 Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP)⁵

All five fire districts in the Town of Bethlehem participate in the Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP). Article 11-A of the New York State General Municipal Law controls the service awards program. The fire district’s board of fire commissioners has the authority to appropriate the money needed annually to fund the service award program. These funds provide pension-like benefits based on a member’s credited years of service. To receive credit for a year of service, a member must earn 50 points in a calendar year. The board of fire commissioners adopts a system for granting points based on attendance at drills, meetings, and emergency responses as well as holding elected positions. The purpose of the service awards is the retention and recruitment of volunteers for the benefit of the voters within the fire district. Beginning in 2008, the Office of the State Comptroller requires each district to complete an annual audit of LOSAP funds by an independent certified public accountant. These independent audits may result in large changes in expenditures following an audit and should not necessarily be viewed negatively. Table 4.5 shows the cost of LOSAP for each district for the period 2006-2010. Data were drawn from district budget data at the local level, which varied in some cases from OSC data. The local data are believed to more accurate.

Table 4.5: LOSAP Costs, by District, 2006-2010

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Delmar	\$65,631	\$65,694	\$74,724	\$74,543	\$71,061
Elmwood Park	\$30,000	\$30,000	\$26,800	\$35,000	\$35,000
Elsmere	\$66,360	\$69,232	\$105,808*	\$109,288	\$119,659
Selkirk	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$65,000	\$75,000	\$150,000*
Slingerlands	\$15,000	\$15,255	\$40,000	\$35,000	\$38,000

*Note 1: Effective January 1, 2008, on advice of counsel, the Elsmere Fire District modified its program to allow members who had already reached entitlement age to continue to earn an annual benefit in the program. This was to avoid potential age discrimination litigation that could occur under EEOC regulations. At the same time, members were reimbursed (lump sum) for years prior to 2008 that they would have earned an annual benefit in the program had they been allowed to earn an annual benefit beyond entitlement age. These lump sum payments totaled \$62,260 and were made to ten individuals out of general operating funds, outside of the LOSAP program administration. These settlements were made for the same reason as the program modification mentioned above. These lump sum payments totaling \$62,260 are not technically LOSAP expenditures, but are indicated here for consistency with the District’s budget data.

Submitted data shows the types of activities and the points awarded per activity vary by fire district. For all the districts, a member must attend 10 percent of the emergency calls to receive 25 points. Selkirk requires that a member must attend 10 percent of emergency calls to receive a service award for that year. A member can receive 1 point for attending a drill for a maximum of 20 points per year; a member can receive between 10 and 25 points for maintaining an elected position. Meeting attendance points are a maximum of 13 in the Elsmere district, 12 in Slingerlands and 20 in Selkirk. Elsmere and Slingerlands provide a maximum of 8 points for operators/drivers. Course attendance allows for a maximum of 15 points in Elsmere and 25 points in Selkirk. Activities classified as “miscellaneous” award a maximum of 15 point in Slingerlands and Selkirk and 12 points in Elsmere.

⁵ Office of the State Comptroller. “LOSAP DC Note.” http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/pubs/releases/losap_dc_note.pdf. (25 September 2011).

Table 4.6 lists the number and percentage of members who received service awards for the year 2010. Elmwood Park is unique among the districts because it established a defined contribution benefit plan, which is generally less expensive.

Table 4.6 Town of Bethlehem Fire District service awards earned for 2010

	Number of qualified members	Percent of members
Delmar	43	51
Elmwood Park	34	72
Elsmere	67	85
Slingerlands	36	80
Selkirk	73	74

In the interview process, very few members commented on the LOSAP program. Developing strategies for the recruitment and retention of new members were mentioned by the majority of those interviewed. This issue is paramount throughout the volunteer fire service from coast to coast. It can be argued however that the merit of a service award program (receiving a financial benefit in retirement) is not a significant draw for the younger generation, which is the target group to maintain/increase membership. This opinion has been raised by several respondents. One respondent explained the program has evolved into more of a retention program than a recruitment program. Keeping members is necessary for any fire district; however, if a member reaches a maximum of accrued years of service, it is questionable whether the member’s level of participation will decrease because no more years can be accumulated and the defined benefit will not increase. There are few statistics about this potential outcome because the LOSAP program is relatively new. Within the next few years, members who have been around since the program’s inception are likely to reach this point.

4.3 Member Activity

The following tables illustrate a breakdown, by district, of member participation by percentage of calls attended. Response data from 2010 was used for these tables. The total number of calls is indicated, the number of calls based on percentage is provided in parenthesis. Under the percentage is the total number of members who attended that percentage of calls. The percentage of members achieving the various thresholds for participation is shown also. Manitou, Inc. tracks participation as a percentage of all calls for service. The activity data is roughly comparable between agencies; that is, a similar number of personnel are responding to similar numbers of calls for service.

At the 50 percent level of participation (the number of members who attend half of calls), the rates vary from zero in the case of EMS calls in Elmwood Park up to a high of over 11 percent for Selkirk Station #1. It is not reasonable to expect that members can attend a majority of calls

for service, especially if they are employed outside the district and/or unable to respond to calls. The participation rates here are reasonable and are on par with other state and national averages. This data is most useful if examined over time to reveal patterns or trends in member activity.

4.3.1 Delmar Fire District

Table 4.5: Delmar Fire District member participation by percent of calls (349 calls, 84 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (34)</i>	<i>20% (69)</i>	<i>30% (104)</i>	<i>50% (174)</i>
# of Members	48	21	14	4
% of Members	57.1	25.0	16.7	4.8

4.3.2 Elmwood Park Fire District (North Bethlehem Fire Department)

Table 4.6: North Bethlehem Fire Department (Elmwood Park Fire District) member participation by percent of fire calls (263 fire calls, 43 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (26)</i>	<i>20% (52)</i>	<i>30% (78)</i>	<i>50% (131)</i>
# of Members	30	20	12	3
% of Members	69.7	46.5	27.9	7.0

Table 4.7: North Bethlehem Fire Department (Elmwood Park Fire District) member participation by percent of EMS calls (365 EMS calls, 43 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (36)</i>	<i>20% (73)</i>	<i>30% (110)</i>	<i>50% (183)</i>
# of Members	18	5	1	0
% of Members	41.9	11.6	0.02	0

4.3.3 Elsmere Fire District

Table 4.8: Elsmere Fire District member participation by percent of calls (360 calls, 74 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (36)</i>	<i>20% (72)</i>	<i>30% (108)</i>	<i>50% (180)</i>
# of Members	65	35	20	5
% of Members	87.8	47.3	27.0	6.8

4.3.4 Selkirk Fire District

Table 4.9: Selkirk Fire District Station #1 member participation by percent of calls (306 calls, 35 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (30)</i>	<i>20% (61)</i>	<i>30% (91)</i>	<i>50% (153)</i>
# of Members	27	13	12	4
% of Members	77.1	8.6	34.3	11.4

Table 4.10: Selkirk Fire District Station #2 member participation by percent of calls (296 calls, 42 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (29)</i>	<i>20% (59)</i>	<i>30% (88)</i>	<i>50% (148)</i>
# of Members	35	21	13	4
% of Members	83.3	50.0	31.0	9.5

Table 4.11: Selkirk Fire District Station #3 member participation by percent of calls (265 calls, 20 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (26)</i>	<i>20% (53)</i>	<i>30% (79)</i>	<i>50% (132)</i>
# of Members	9	9	5	1
% of Members	45.0	45.0	25.0	5.0

4.3.5 Slingerlands Fire District

Table 4.12: Slingerlands Fire District member participation by percent of calls (224 calls, 45 members)

<i>%(#of Calls)</i>	<i>10% (22)</i>	<i>20% (44)</i>	<i>30% (67)</i>	<i>50% (112)</i>
# of Members	31	22	15	6
% of Members	68.9	48.9	33.3	13.3

5.0 Current Purchasing Arrangements

The procurement policies of the fire Districts are bound by New York State General Municipal Law. Section 103 establishes the following:

- The threshold for purchase contracts subject to competitive bidding is \$20,000. (The previous threshold of \$10,000 was amended in 2010.)
- All contracts for public works involving an expenditure of more than \$35,000 are subject to competitive bidding. (The previous threshold of \$20,000 was amended in 2009.)

Section 104b of the State General Municipal Law requires the establishment of policies and procedures governing all procurements of goods and services which are not required to be made pursuant to the competitive bidding requirements (contract awarded to lowest bidder via sealed bid). This creates a guideline which allows the individual districts to craft a policy which sets specific requirements for the purchase of goods and services.

The procurement policies from all fire districts, were supplied for this study. At the time of the report, all the procurement policies had been updated to reflect the changes in thresholds for competitive bidding as directed by the Office of the State Comptroller.

The Delmar Fire District's *2011 Procurement Policies* establishes the following requirements:

When competitive bidding is not required by law for **purchase contracts**, it shall be the policy of the Board to solicit alternative proposals or quotations as follows:

Table 5.1: Delmar Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of commodities, equipment or goods

Dollar Limit	Procedure
\$3,000.00 to \$9,999.00	Two (2) written or faxed quotes
\$10,000.00 to \$19,999.00	Three (3) written or faxed quotes/proposals

When competitive bidding is not required by law for **public works contracts**, it shall be the policy of the Board to solicit alternative proposals or quotations as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Delmar Fire District procurement policy for public works contracts

Dollar Limit	Procedure
\$3,000.00 to \$4,999.00	Two (2) written or faxed quotes
\$5,000.00 to \$34,999.00	Three (3) written or faxed quotes/proposals

The Delmar Fire District's policy notes, "In those cases where the lowest bid is not accepted and the contract is awarded to someone other than the lowest responsible bidder, the Board shall place a statement in the minutes of the reason for not selecting the lowest responsible bidder."

Elmwood Park’s policy for purchasing is shown in the tables below. Their policy is consistent with State law, and requires multiple written quotes for good in excess of \$5,000 or capital projects in excess of \$5,000.

Table 5.3: Elmwood Park Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of commodities, equipment or goods

Dollar Limit	Procedure
\$1,000 to \$4,999	Two verbal quotations
\$5,000 to \$19,999	Three written Quotes or a Request for Proposals
\$20,000 and Over	Formal Request for Proposals

Table 5.4: Elmwood Park Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of public works projects/contracts

Dollar Limit	Procedure
\$1,000 to \$2,999	Two verbal quotations
\$3,000 to \$4,999	Two written Quotes or a Request for Proposals
\$5,000 to \$34,999	Three written quotes or a Request for Proposals
\$35,000 and Up	Formal Request for Proposals

The Elmwood Park Fire District’s *Procurement Policy* has established the following procedure for the purchase of commodities, equipment or goods, it was recently revised to reflect changes at the State level.

Table 5.5: Elsmere Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of commodities, equipment or goods

Dollar Limit	Procedure
Up to \$500	Approval by a Commissioner or the District Chief required
\$501 to \$3,000	Documented verbal quotes from at least 3 separate vendors (if available)
\$3001 to \$20,000	Formal written quotes from at least 3 separate vendors (if available)

Table 5.6: Elsmere Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of public works projects/contracts

Dollar Limit	Procedure
Up to \$2,999	Documented verbal quotes from at least three separate vendors (if available)
\$3,000 to \$4,999	Formal written quotes from at least two separate vendors (if available)
\$5,000 to \$34,999	Formal written quotes from at least three separate vendors (if available)

The Elsmere policy states “whenever the lowest quote is not awarded, there must be written documentation of the reason for the award.” (General Municipal Law does allow a fire district to make the selection of professional services or services requiring special or technical skills based on accountability, reliability, expertise and general competence instead of the lowest bid.)

These two examples show that while the General Municipal Law gives a framework for procurement policies, it also gives the individual districts the latitude to develop their own working procedures. Included in the Delmar Fire Department’s *2011 Procurement Policies* is a list of designated vendors who have been approved for service based on price and reliability. The Elsmere Fire District’s *Procurement Policy* has no approved vendor list, and the District may contact any bidders it chooses for price quotations.

The goals of the procurement policy are to achieve the highest possible savings for the fire district. The policy of the Delmar Board of Commissioners is to purchase materials or equipment under State Contract when possible. The Board may, by majority vote, solicit competitive bids even though an item is offered under State Contract when the Board determines it may be in the best interest of the Delmar Fire District to do so. The New York State Office of General Services provides an index of commodities, services, and technology contracts.⁶ Available equipment includes: SCBA, thermal imaging cameras, protective outerwear (bunker coats and pants, boots, helmets, gloves), communications equipment (portable radios) and hazardous incident response equipment (hose, extinguishers, hand tools, radiation detectors).

The Selkirk Fire District has a similar policy for procurement, but provides more detailed guidance for additional purchases than the other Districts. Tables 5.7 through 5.9 summarize the policy for goods, public works, and other items.

⁶ New York State Office of General Services. “Procurement services group Alphabetical index of commodity, service, and technology contracts.” <http://ogs.state.ny.us/purchase/pdfdocument/rptMailingListindex.pdf>. (25 September 2011).

Figure 5.7: Selkirk Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of commodities, equipment or goods

Dollar Limit	Procedure
Up to \$1,999	One verbal or written quote
\$2,000 to \$4,999	Two verbal or written quotes from at least two separate vendors
\$5,000 to \$9,999	Two written quotes by fax, or through a Request for Proposals
\$10,000 to \$19,999	Three written quotes by fax, or through a Request for Proposals

Figure 5.8: Selkirk Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of public works

Dollar Limit	Procedure
Up to \$2,999	One verbal or written quote
\$3,000 to \$4,999	Two verbal or written quotes from at least two separate vendors
\$5,000 to \$6,999	Two written quotes by fax, or through a Request for Proposals
\$7,000 to \$34,999	Three written quotes by fax, or through a Request for Proposals

Figure 5.9: Selkirk Fire District, Additional Purchase Requirements

Description	Limits	Verbal Quotes	Written Quotes	Follow District Procurement Policy
Emergencies* - Contact any Commissioner – Full Board will confirm later	*Emergency as described on pg. 9 of Sect 104.b			X
Insurance (Coverage secured on Individual Policy Basis	Liability; Accident; Workers Compensation, etc		3 or more	
Professional Services				X
Leases/Rentals	Under \$1,000	2		
Leases/Rentals	\$1,000 - \$2,500	3		
State Contract Prices Accepted				X

The Slingerlands Fire District also has a procurement policy, updated in 2011 to reflect changes in New York state law. Like others, it distinguishes between goods and services and public works. Tables 5.9 and 5.10 show their implementation of the policy.

Table 5.10: Slingerlands Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of goods and services

Dollar Limit	Procedure
Up to \$1,999	1 quote
\$2,000 to \$4,999	2 verbal quotes
\$5,000 to \$9,999	2 Formal written quotes of RFP
\$10,000 - \$19,999	3 Formal written quotes or RFP

Table 5.11: Slingerlands Fire District procurement policy procedure for purchase of public works projects/contracts

Dollar Limit	Procedure
Up to \$2,999	1 quote
\$3,000 to \$4,999	2 verbal quotes
\$5,000 to \$6,999	2 Formal written quotes of RFP
\$7,000 - \$34,900	3 Formal written quotes or RFP

Cooperation between the fire districts has evolved over the years. This study affirms the desires of the districts to analyze the current delivery of services with recommendations for the future. If services are going to be shared between districts, an organized approach to the purchase and maintenance of equipment must be established. A key feature of this is the standardization of equipment.

Joint training exercises build teamwork and increase the level of safety at an emergency. These exercises usually focus on the tactical aspects of an operation, such as stretching hoselines, raising ladders, search procedures, incident command (IC) and communications. Having a common set of tools (i.e. hose, nozzles, SCBAs, forcible entry tools, metering devices, search ropes) makes for a more efficient and effective operation. Once standardization is achieved, future saving can be realized with respect to group purchases, required maintenance and testing of equipment, and schedules can be developed for the bulk replacement of equipment that has reached its service life. Departments have cooperated with the purchases of equipment—namely hose, radios, and emergency escape ropes.⁷ Currently the North Bethlehem Fire Department purchases personal protective equipment (PPE) and performs apparatus and hose testing with other fire departments in Town of Guilderland.

⁷ In 2009, NYS Department of Labor Code Rule 800.7 established the requirements for the *Emergency Escape and Self Rescue Ropes and System Components for Firefighters*. Fire departments had to provide this system and the associated training to its members. The significant cost of the required equipment and training forced local fire departments to cooperate in order to provide each firefighter with an escape rope and system components and to instruct firefighters in the proper use of the system.