



COLORADO FIRE COMMISSION

RECOMMENDATION 20-05

Implementing a Comprehensive Fire Data Collection and Dissemination Program

Statutory Duties: Per 24-33.5-1233(4)(b)(I) Develop an accurate understanding of Colorado's Fire Problems, including the number of injuries and fatalities, overall fire losses, and the causes and origins of structural and wildland fires.

Assumptions:

1. Fire data is critical to understanding Colorado's true fire problem.

Providing better data management for the Fire Service in Colorado begins by investing time and analysis in how fire departments collect data statewide, what data are gathered, and how the data are used to identify and respond to ongoing fire problems and trends in Colorado. These efforts are key to understanding what is needed to enhance data collection efforts, inform the public, and determine where we are going in the future and how to get there. This work includes both short-term and long-term strategies.

The Fire Data Subcommittee recently conducted a survey of fire departments in Colorado to learn more about the current status of fire data collection within the state. The survey findings provided some helpful insights regarding the percentage of fire departments that do/do not currently report their data, and some of the possible reasons. The findings also showed a strong interest in additional training for data collection and reporting. The Fire Data Subcommittee also determined that outreach to other states and organizations, regarding their best practices for data collection, will be helpful to our efforts in Colorado. All this information was used to develop some initial short-term recommendations to the Colorado Fire Commission regarding methods for improving fire data collection and the use of this data.

These recommendations for short-term steps will help determine the current status of data collection and help inform long-term, sustainable solutions. This information will then be used to develop long-term programs to improve the ability of the Fire Service in Colorado to collect, analyze, and effectively use this data. This is a starting point.

Detail

- I. Define more clearly how many fire departments in Colorado consistently report their data. It appears that more than half of fire departments in the state do not consistently report their data. Contact fire departments that do not consistently report to determine why they do not report data and identify solutions for improving data reporting. Identify clearly the barriers to reporting and further refine short-term recommendations based on findings.
- II. Conduct an inventory of every database used by different segments of the Fire Service in Colorado. This will include different data systems used by individual, local fire departments, and those used by larger agencies, such as state and federal agencies involved with wildland firefighting. Evaluate the similarities and differences among the various databases and the

- types of data collected. Develop plans to access the needed data from the different databases and develop uniform methods to compare and consolidate the data for use and analysis.
- III. Consult with Law Enforcement agencies, other types of organizations, and other states to learn more about their data reporting criteria and data collection best practices. Evaluate any regulations in place for collection and submittal of data, including methods that may exist to improve the consistency of data reporting, such as reporting requirements tied to eligibility for funding through various grant programs. Use this feedback to further inform efforts in Colorado to develop best practices for data collection and reporting.
 - IV. Improve the accuracy of the data reported by providing more training, and by evaluating the reporting methods for different types of reports. For example, EMS reports often receive more oversight and review compared to Fire reports. Identify the different types of data that are actually needed by the Fire Service in Colorado, evaluate the various methods and practices used to collect those different types of data from different types of reports, and develop reporting methods and training programs that address those needs and help to improve data reporting. For example, a mentoring program could be created in which fire departments more proficient with data reporting assist departments that are not as proficient. Include suppression support agencies which provide assistance to jurisdictional authorities, and data collected from fire origin and cause investigations.
 - V. Develop an organized system to publish data. This will include starting with data currently collected based on the findings from the recommendations above, as well as data collected in the future based on the improvements outlined in this document. Use the data to develop data tables; compare Colorado data to other states and national trends; and provide methods to use the data for analysis and decision-making. Communicate annual data results statewide to deepen understanding about fire trends, challenges and potential solutions. Key to this effort is creating a comprehensive communications plan that identifies target audiences, key messages, communications tools and dissemination strategies. The overall objective is to tell the story of the fire problem in Colorado to various audiences in easily understood formats.

Next Steps:

1. The subcommittee will create action plans and identify resources to implement these recommendations.