

Blue Ribbon Panel

USFA Review

On the afternoon of April 29, 1998, FEMA Director James Lee Witt invited representatives from several United States fire service organizations to a meeting to express their candid opinions regarding the federal fire programs—specifically, the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy. The next evening most members of this invited group would celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Congressional Fire Services Institute at its annual dinner with an awareness of two ironies. First, that during the twenty-four hour period between the meeting and the dinner, approximately eleven Americans would die in a fire-related incident and, secondly, that the federal fire programs charged with dealing with the national fire problem were in disarray.

At the Old Executive Office Building, Director Witt listened to fire service leaders express their doubts and lack of confidence in the United States Fire Administration. The Director had invited the group to air their concerns and to increase his understanding of what the consequences were of what was happening to the fire programs under FEMA's direction. As the Director listened carefully, there emerged an interesting and important argument from the fire service leaders assembled with him.

Although the fire problem in the United States has improved, they suggested, the federal programs designated to oversee fire-related issues have declined significantly over the past decade, thereby putting continued success in jeopardy. In terms of providing what they were designed to supply to the fire service, the federal programs were not poised effectively to meet the challenges of the 21st century. At the conclusion of this historic meeting, Director Witt asked each group to put their concerns to him in writing, outlining major issues and suggestions for improvements. In addition, the Director pledged that he would appoint a Blue Ribbon Panel to examine their concerns and “the future role of the USFA to reflect the changes in the fire service, as well as its new needs.”

This is the report of the Blue Ribbon Panel.

Table of Contents

Focus Piece

List of Blue Ribbon Panel Members	2
Introduction	4
Overview of Findings	7
Report Methodologies	10
Findings and Recommendations	12
• Mission	13
• Organizational Structure	14
• Management and Leadership	15
• Funding	19
• Planning	32
• Personnel Issues	35
• Advocacy and Partnership	38
• Concerns about the Future	41
Conclusion	42

Appendices

A Funding Appropriated in Public Law for USFA, 1980-1992	44
B List of Recommendations	45
C USFA Documents Reviewed	53
D Budget Recommendations	54
E Fire Research Agenda List	55
F USFA Government Performance and Results Act Goals	56

Blue Ribbon Panel Members

Stephen P. Austin, Chair

Claim Superintendent, State Farm Fire and Casualty Company,
representing the *International Association of Arson Investigators*

Steven T. Edwards, Vice Chair

Director, Maryland Fire & Rescue Institute, University of Maryland,
representing the *North American Fire Training Directors*

Dennis Compton

Chief, Mesa (AZ) Fire Department and Past Chair of the International
Fire Service Training Association (Executive Board)
representing the *CFSI National Advisory Committee*

Richard A. Dyer

Chief, Lee's Summit (MO) Fire Department,
representing *the International Association of Fire Chiefs*

Rocco J. Gabriele

Fire Marshal, State of Maryland,
representing the *National Association of State Fire Marshals*

Daniel L. Jones

Chief, Chapel Hill (NC) Fire Department,
representing the *International Society of Fire Service Instructors*

Julie E. Luckey

Firefighter/Paramedic, Chesterfield County (VA) Fire Department,
representing *Women in the Fire Service, Inc.*

E. James Monihan

Vice-President, Administration, Beebe Medical Center (DE),
representing the *National Volunteer Fire Council*

Salvador Morales

Dallas (TX) Fire Department,
representing the *National Association of Hispanic Firefighters*

Anthony R. O'Neill

Vice-President, Government Affairs, National Fire Protection Association,
representing the *National Fire Protection Association*

Robert Sledgeski

Baltimore City Fire Department,
representing the *International Association of Fire Fighters*

Romeo Spaulding

Past President, International Association of Black Professional
Firefighters, representing the *International Association of Black
Professional Firefighters*

Cynthia A. Wilk

Assistant Director, Division of Codes and Standards, New Jersey
Department of Community Affairs,
representing the *National Fire Academy Board of Visitors*

Introduction

The United States Fire Administration, a directorate within the Federal Emergency Management Agency, was established as an entity within the Department of Commerce by the passage of the *Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974* (PL 93-498).¹ Previously, fire-related issues and research had been scattered among a number of different agencies of the federal government. The USFA was created out of the turmoil of a Presidential report, *America Burning*, which painted an alarming and graphic picture of the nation's fire problem. It was hoped that an agency designed to focus solely on this national problem would produce dramatic results "to reduce the nation's losses caused by fire through better fire prevention and control." In addition to the USFA, Public Law 93-498 also created a National Fire Academy to "advance the professional development of fire service personnel and of other persons engaged in fire prevention and control activities."



As it was envisioned, the USFA would work intensively on behalf of local fire authorities through four program areas: data collection, public education, training, and technology development. The National Fire Academy, the training arm of the USFA, was envisioned to be an advanced school for fire officers and other allied professionals, providing them with the training they would require to significantly improve fire protection at the local level. Interestingly, both the USFA and its NFA were created to be cutting-edge organizations—"To encourage new and improved programs and activities by state and local governments."

For a while, that's exactly what happened. The improvements made in fire protection technology under the aegis of the USFA were outstanding. The advances of the 1970s and 1980s made in the area of residential fire protection systems—both smoke alarms and rapid-response sprinklers—were due in large part to the leadership and advocacy of the USFA. Likewise, improvements in firefighter personal protective equipment (PPE), especially self-contained breathing apparatus and turnout gear, were also greatly improved under this period of USFA pro-activity. During this time, also, the National Fire Academy was advocating and teaching a paradigm shift for the fire service from a concentration on response efforts (suppression activities) to a focus on prevention

¹ The National Fire Prevention and Control Administration was renamed the United States Fire Administration on October 5, 1978.

as a more effective strategy for saving lives and property. These two achievements—the development of early intervention technology coupled with an emphasis on prevention—contributed to early and positive reviews of the USFA and its National Fire Academy.

This optimism was borne out by early successes. In 1987, a review of the 90 goals established in *America Burning* noted positive trends since the establishment of the federal fire programs some fourteen years earlier. Indeed, between 1973 and 1987, residential fire death rates fell dramatically, in some years as much as 23%.² Other indicators were equally positive, including a drop in firefighter fatalities, fewer ignitions reported to local fire departments, and a decrease in the dollar loss rate of fire-related incidents. Although civilian and firefighter injuries remained high, the overall picture was improving. But, as we shall see, these early successes have not been followed by a subsequent period of achievement by the USFA, even though attempts have been made to recreate the hopefulness and promise of the first ten years.



The most significant of these attempts occurred in 1979 when, with the agreement of many fire service organizations, the United States Fire Administration was moved by Executive Order from the Department of Commerce to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It was hoped that a natural *affinity of mission* would align the interests of FEMA with the USFA resulting in important outcomes.

Unfortunately, at this same time, FEMA was entering upon its bleakest days, described in a Congressional report as a deeply troubled agency and a “political dumping ground.”³ It appeared that the United States Fire Administration had been placed in one of the darkest holes in Washington.

However, since 1993 and the appointment of James Lee Witt as Director, FEMA has become recognized as a model for governmental reinvention. Where it was formerly a demoralized and ineffective player in emergency management, FEMA is now one of the most respected and admired agencies in the federal government. State and local emergency management officials value FEMA as a thoroughly trustworthy and dependable partner. FEMA, through its energy and adept management of fiscal and staffing resources, has earned the respect of the emergency management community, its practitioners and the people they serve.

² *America Burning Revisited*, November 30-Dec 2, 1987, page 8.

³ Washington Post, August 19, 1998, A19.

What has clearly been overlooked in FEMA's reinvention, however, has been a focus on the federal fire programs for which FEMA is also responsible. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has consistently concentrated on the development of the emergency management infrastructure, while allowing the fire programs to deteriorate—even though it is well documented that the everyday emergencies associated with fires occasion much greater economic damage and claim many more lives than the combined effect of natural emergencies. The emergency management structure is dependent upon fire and rescue services as first responders in all man-made and natural disasters. To ignore the role of fire and rescue in emergency management is inappropriate and places the public at greater risk.

This concentration on emergency management connected with large-scale natural emergencies has been at the expense of the fire programs. The United States Fire Administration is now experiencing similar problems of staffing, budget, and morale which Director Witt found at FEMA in 1993. And yet, the fire problem in America remains very high—just last year alone, over 4,000 people died in fire-related incidents; every 18 seconds a fire department responded to a fire somewhere in the United States; and because of this the United States still has one of the worst fire problems in the industrialized world. In effect, the fire service organizations who met with Director Witt in Washington last April described to him a situation which they find intolerable.

Thus members of the Blue Ribbon Panel worked hard to convey the gravity of the situation regarding the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy, while remaining optimistic that this troubled agency can also be restored to fulfill its mission. As was noted repeatedly during its deliberations, the Panel is convinced that the USFA must be a vital and vigorous partner in the nation's public safety responsibilities. To do so means that the USFA and its fire programs must be first and foremost adequately funded. Beyond money, however, lie crises of faith and confidence which money will not fix. Faith and confidence are leadership issues—harder to address but, in the long run, more enduring and important.

⁴FEMA's own Strategic Plan, *Partnership for a Safer Future* (1997) notes that "...the loss of life and property resulting from fire far exceeds that of all other natural disasters combined" (6).

⁵National Fire Protection Association, August 1998.

Overview of Findings

During its review of documents and through interviews with officials of the federal fire programs, the Blue Ribbon Panel consistently found three core deficiencies that are undermining the effectiveness of the United States Fire Administration. These areas are **leadership, resource management, and communication**. It may be argued that deficiencies in any one of these areas should warrant great concern; when all three are weak, grave consequences follow. The Panel finds that this is indeed the case, and urges Director Witt to take immediate steps needed to create rapid improvements.



In terms of leadership, the Panel finds that **current leadership has not provided the level of advocacy or level of interest in fire and emergency services necessary to justify continued support by these constituencies**. Leadership at the highest level of the FEMA/USFA has not “connected” in symbolically or politically meaningful ways with the fire service community. The current Administrator has not been able to demonstrate to FEMA that fire programs, when allowed to languish, directly affect the lives and welfare of all American citizens. The absence of this dialog between the leaders of FEMA and USFA has consequences beyond those of ordinary leadership problems that can threaten success. The Administrator of the USFA is responsible for articulating the nation’s fire problem to the Director of FEMA and Congress in order to secure adequate resources and funding necessary to address the elements of that problem.

The Panel notes that while the position of the Administrator is a Presidential appointment, future candidates for this position in the United States Fire Administration must be **fully qualified with a demonstrated interest in and knowledge of the fire and emergency services, as well as a track record of exemplary management and supervisory skills**. There is no time for a long learning curve when there is a civilian injury due to a fire-related incident every 22 minutes in the United States (NFPA, 1998). In addition to work-related experience, this position also requires the energy and dynamic vision of a person who is passionately interested in, and committed to, protecting the

public from fire and other emergencies. This would be demonstrated by frequent interaction, advocacy and an often reiterated commitment to teamwork, and the development of shared problem-solving techniques. The USFA Administrator should also be networked with the nation's fire service so that talents and solutions at the local level can be identified to help solve problems at the national level.

In its recommendations, the Panel suggests ways in which the current administrator can demonstrate substantial improvements to restore the confidence of the constituents this office was created to serve. Furthermore, changes in FEMA's orientation toward the fire programs will be examined and improvements suggested.

At no time since 1974 has the USFA had the resources it needs to address this nation's fire problems with sustained impact (see Appendix A: Appropriations vs.



Actual Funding, 1980-1992). Funding for the USFA is inadequate by any standard. To make matters worse, precious dollars which have been spent recently have not consistently returned measurable value. USFA cannot continue doing business as usual. Over 32,000 fire departments across the United States depend on the services of the USFA to help address problems at the local level. **This is what USFA was chartered to do**

and where the consequence of under-performance most dramatically impacts on citizens.

Resources, as will be discussed in the recommendations portion of this report, should be closely aligned with Mission. The current misalignment between mission and resources is, the Panel notes, largely due to a lack of planning for an uncertain future—not a fundamental flaw in the mission established for and affirmed by the USFA. In fact, the Panel strongly endorses the four program responsibilities of the USFA (data collection, training, public education, and technology advancement) and maintains that each must be properly funded.

It became apparent during interviews with officials from the federal fire programs that **there exist major communication weaknesses within the USFA, and between it and FEMA, that have serious consequences.** The staffs of both the USFA and its

National Fire Academy have issued position papers highly critical of and questioning the competency of their management.⁶ Each of these reports describes conditions which are seriously undermining how each organization delivers its products to the public and documents the general ineffectiveness of USFA efforts.

As noted earlier, because leadership of the **USFA has not nurtured the necessary relationships to strengthen the federal fire programs**, FEMA has not put these fire programs into the proper priority they deserve. This lack of attention to the federal fire programs affects lives and produces economic losses throughout the country. These negative consequences are an everyday reality.

There is in effect a **broken covenant** between the federal fire programs and the people and institutions they were created to serve. Because leadership has failed to envision how things can be better, because funds have not been used in creative, dynamic and impacting ways, and because there is darkness and silence where there ought to be illumination and advocacy, the USFA has become marginalized in the eyes of its constituents. This report will explore, in depth, these three critical areas of leadership, resource management, and communication through a series of findings and recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Panel.⁷

⁶ See *A White Paper to the National Fire Academy Board of Visitors, (1998)* and *Building a Fire Safe America: The Campaign for a Stronger USFA (1998)*.

⁷ A complete and separate list of all the recommendations in this report can be found as Appendix B.

Report Methodologies

The recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Panel in this report were based on the following:

- A two-day meeting of the Blue Ribbon Panel in Washington, D.C. on July 30-31, 1998, to review commentary from fire and EMS organizations regarding the effectiveness and future direction of the USFA and NFA. The Blue Ribbon Panel, representing thirteen fire service organizations, was asked to hold its own deliberations regarding the two organizations in question and to make recommendations to the Director. During this meeting, officials from the USFA and NFA were asked to make presentations regarding the challenges facing their organizations and to describe their expectations for the future.

A second meeting of the Blue Ribbon Panel was convened on September 22, 1998, in Washington, D.C. to complete deliberations and finalize this report.

- Dozens of documents were submitted to the Panel from the United States Fire Administration for review. These included enabling legislation, budgets, annual reports, strategic plans, letters to and between USFA and FEMA officials, committee reports, and various other internal planning tools. A full list of these documents is included as Appendix C.

- A period of four weeks following the first Washington D.C. meeting was used to analyze data which had been collected in other venues and meetings regarding the federal fire programs. Letters and telephone calls from individuals outside the official process were considered and responded to during this period.

As an aid to the process, a specialized fire service consulting group, Greenridge Associates, Inc., was hired to facilitate the Panel's meetings and guide the preparation of its report. The Blue Ribbon Panel recognizes the expertise and professionalism of

Greenridge Associates, Inc., throughout the process. In addition, the liaison provided by Director Witt to the Blue Ribbon Panel was outstanding and greatly appreciated.

The recommendations in this report are not based on the findings of an on-going Presidential or Congressional commission. Rather, they are the result of Delphi Techniques, which tapped the knowledge base of experts, and traditional research methods.⁸ Given the high degree of corroboration between the Blue Ribbon Panel findings and those of other interest groups looking into the federal fire programs, the Panel is comfortable with the depth of its research and conclusions.

⁸ The Delphi Technique is group forecasting tool that uses estimates from experts and feedback summaries of these estimates for additional estimates by these experts until reasonable consensus occurs.

Findings and Recommendations

The Blue Ribbon Panel began its deliberations by reviewing the letters sent to Director James Lee Witt by those who attended the meeting at the Old Executive Office Building in April, 1998. These documents revealed that there were eight major areas of concern voiced consistently by the fire service organizations asked to submit commentary. These included:



- I. Mission
- II. Organizational Structure
- III. Leadership and Management
- IV. Funding and Resource Management
- V. Planning
- VI. Personnel and Human Resource Issues
- VII. Advocacy and Partnership
- VIII. Concerns About the Future

For the purposes of this report, these topic areas will be considered, but it should be noted that, in one way or another, all areas concern the three categories of **leadership, resources, and communication**. There are no greater or lesser recommendations; rather they are all intended to support the improvements required for the future success of the USFA and its National Fire Academy. While the Panel hopes that all pathways to success will be considered, the implementation of any group of recommendations should precipitate dramatic progress for the federal fire programs. And while this is not a strategic plan for the United States Fire Administration, there are within this report suggestions for planning which will aid the USFA throughout its rebuilding phase.

I. Mission

To begin its work, the Panel reviewed the Public Law (P.L. 93-498) which created the USFA.⁹ The Panel also examined the mission statements of both FEMA and USFA to see if there did indeed exist an alignment of interests between the two agencies and whether, in particular, FEMA's mission statement adequately reflected its responsibility relative to fire-related issues.

The Blue Ribbon Panel concluded that the mission statements of both FEMA and the USFA demonstrate an adequate recognition of their goals as established by Public Law 93-498. Although FEMA's statement does not mention the word "fire," it also does not mention any other particular public safety threat, such as floods. The USFA mission statement, it was felt by the group, adequately represents the four program areas of the USFA and requires no changes to be made to it.

Upon examination of the mission statement of the National Fire Academy, however, there emerged some concern that the paragraph given to the Panel as a mission statement fell short in terms of capturing how important the work of the NFA is for fire-fighters, fire officers and the citizens they serve:

The National Fire Academy serves as the national focal point for advancing the professional development of fire service personnel engaged in fire prevention and control activities. Volunteer and career fire service professionals are provided access to the most recent advances on technology and management perspectives and the NFA also offers education for allied professions—code enforcement, architecture, city management and administration, planning, and emergency medical services.

Recommendation # 1: The Panel endorses the mission statements of both FEMA and the USFA regarding their sensitivity to the nation's fire problem, but suggests that the National Fire Academy develop a mission statement that more accurately describes the importance of its training and educational activities for the fire service and the resulting benefits for the public.

1.1 FEMA, USFA and NFA should revisit their mission statements regularly to ensure that each is responding to the fire problems to the best of their capabilities and that the concerns of their fire service and allied professional constituents remain prominent.

⁹P.L. 93-498 was subsequently amended, but not significantly so, in 1984, 1990 and 1992.

Even though the Panel was satisfied with FEMA's mission statement, it noted that the name of the Federal Emergency Management Agency reflects a discipline loyalty to emergency management, the public safety sector created by FEMA that deals with large-scale natural disasters. The Panel encourages the Director to consider adding "fire" to the name of FEMA.

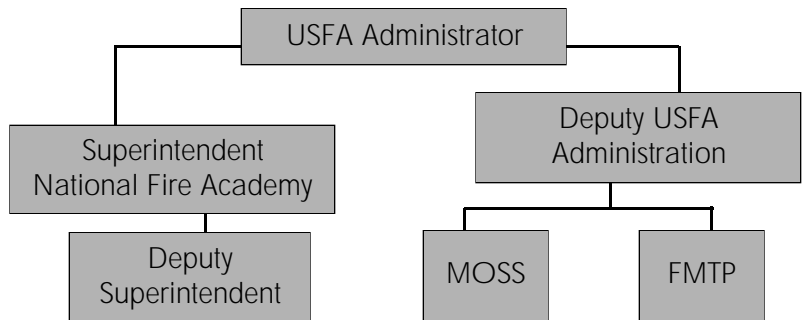
Recommendation #2: Demonstrate the importance of fire safety by renaming FEMA the **Fire and Emergency Management Agency.**

2.1 Use the occasion of the name change to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the fire service community and promote fire issues to the public at large.

A review of Public Law 93-498 concluded that the law which created the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy is still reflective of the work each performs. Although two areas of responsibility created by Congress have been dropped as national goals—the creation of community master plans, and public awards—the Panel concluded that P.L. 93-498 is not in need of revision at this time.

II. Organizational Structure

In this case, organizational structure refers both to the organizational location of the fire programs, and to aspects of relationships between the fire programs and FEMA. Several of the letters to the Director questioned whether the United States Fire Administration and its National Fire Academy should remain located under the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. It had been suggested by some that since FEMA had ignored the fire programs, they should be moved again.



Present USFA Senior Leadership Reporting System

The Panel concluded, however, that there are no substantial reasons to remove the fire programs from FEMA and, in fact, they stand the greatest chance of maturing under FEMA, if allowed to reach their full potential. Structurally, the USFA and NFA at the Associate Director level are where they should be, considering FEMA's role as an agency which responds to disasters and major emergencies.

This is not to suggest, however, that structural clarification between FEMA and the USFA would not occasion major improvements. Also, reporting relationships between the leaders within the USFA need to be analyzed and improved. The Panel urges that the issues of empowerment, delegation of authority, and accountability be clarified by the Director of FEMA for the USFA Administrator, the Deputy Administrator and Superintendent of the NFA. Throughout discussions with leadership, the Panel noted that empowerment of the Deputy and the Superintendent would permit the Administrator more time to focus on other areas of strategic leadership.

Recommendation #3: The panel recommends that the reporting relationships between the United States Fire Administrator, the Deputy Fire Administrator, and the Superintendent of the National Fire Academy be redefined so that these working relationships can be improved in terms of empowerment, delegation of authority, and accountability.

3.1 Determine if the current system of the Superintendent and the Deputy Administrator both reporting directly to the Fire Administrator is one which best encourages the flow of information toward positive and productive outcomes.

3.2 USFA should demonstrate a willingness and eagerness to reconfigure reporting relationships if they are not understood or not working efficiently.

III. Management and Leadership

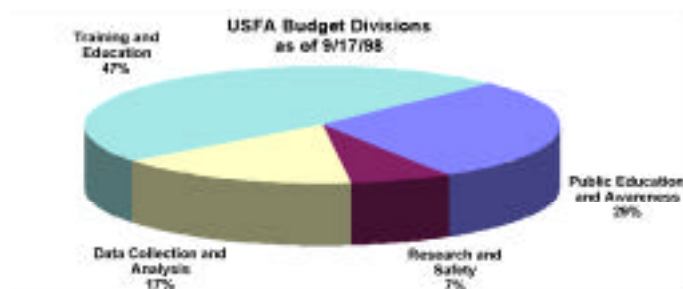
During its discussions, and in responding to the letters received by Director Witt, the issue of leadership of the USFA was of great interest and concern and therefore a high priority for examination. Specifically, the Panel sought to determine if problems at

the highest level of USFA were affecting programmatic effectiveness, management at lower levels, and general morale throughout the Fire Administration. The letters of commentary and discussions with USFA officials demonstrated to the Panel that there indeed exists a wide chasm between what the USFA was intended to do and how it has actually performed within the last decade, and that much of this discrepancy has to do with leadership.

The United States Fire Administration has four programmatic areas over which it must establish priorities, manage resources, and determine success and failure.¹⁰ These include:

- Fire Data Collection and Analysis performed by the National Fire Data Center
- Fire Research and Technology
- Public Fire Awareness and Education
- Training and Education for Fire Service and Allied Professions at the National Fire Academy

What the Panel discovered is that due to poor leadership, especially in the area of advocacy for resources, each of these program areas has suffered. Two programs, in fact—Research and Public Awareness and Education—are almost to the point of extinction. That these programs have apparently not been justified during budget negotiations, nor managed properly when scarce resources were available, is extremely unfortunate, directly affecting the health and safety of citizens and firefighters.



The Panel noted further that leadership and accountability problems exist throughout all levels of the USFA and its four programs, including the National Fire Academy. Effective leadership is blocked at every level of management. While it's obvious that leadership at the head of USFA needs to make dramatic and sustained improvements, it is equally clear that FEMA leadership must also exert the kind of interest in USFA that will encourage accountability, loyalty, and guardianship of its programs by staff and at all levels of management.

¹⁰ There are actually five major organizational activities if one includes the operation of the National Emergency Training Center at Emmitsburg, but these four programs represent the structure by which activities get accomplished.

Recommendation # 4: The current United States Fire Administration does not have the confidence of the fire and emergency services. The Panel recommends that the FEMA Director and/or the Fire Administrator take the following actions:

4.1 Demonstrate a higher and sustained level of understanding about fire and emergency services issues through an advocacy at the federal level of those challenges facing fire and EMS managers through vigorous justification of USFA program goals and objectives.

4.2 Increase visibility at emergencies where a federal response is necessary to demonstrate that fire and EMS personnel are America's first responders to all hazards and as such deserve the same interest and funding that FEMA has shown to the emergency management sector.

4.3 Relocate the office of the USFA Administration, including staff, to the Washington, D.C., headquarters of FEMA in order to be a constant advocate of fire issues, especially during budget and resource negotiations. The Panel suggests, however, that the staff of the National Fire Academy remain in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

4.4 FEMA must develop a job description for the United States Fire Administrator which lists the qualities and attributes of an effective administrator, including performance objectives and standards. It is strongly encouraged that these attributes include demonstrated professional ability in fire and rescue disciplines.

The Panel's discussion regarding leadership also noted that FEMA's intense focus on the emergency management of large-scale natural disasters has created a culture within FEMA that tends to view the fire programs as secondary. This has had disastrous effects on the fire programs. The Panel hopes that the leadership of FEMA can direct an organizational sea change in the agency in the recognition that fire/ EMS

provide the backbone of emergency preparedness and response in every community in America. All specialized emergency management relies upon this fire/EMS infrastructure. FEMA's ***Project Impact—Building a Disaster Resistant Community***, for



instance, is substantially built upon the fire prevention model of identifying and reducing known risks in the environment, yet the fire service community has not been elevated to the partnership level it deserves in this important FEMA initiative.

Recommendation # 5: The leadership and organizational culture of FEMA must change by altering its views of fire & EMS issues in order to make programmatic changes which reflect the real impact of fire related hazards and emergencies (in terms of deaths, injuries and impact on the American economy) which greatly exceed those associated with large-scale natural disasters.

5.1 Include USFA Administrator in decisions of all FEMA's directorates as USFA fire and EMS customers represent those who are first responders in the field to FEMA's initiatives.

5.2 Create opportunities for interaction between the federal, state and local emergency managers and fire service managers to coordinate activities regarding risk identification and mitigation efforts.

5.3 Partner with the fire service in supporting changes on the level of those directed toward the emergency managers: make FIRE a part of FEMA through increasing the role of the USFA in FEMA.

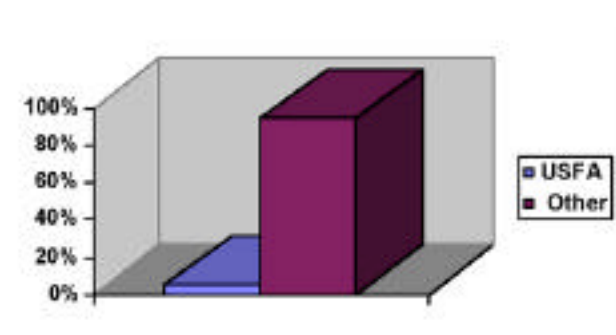
5.4 Recognize that the fire service model of risk reduction through prevention efforts has created the finest emergency services infrastructure in the world and use these professionals to further the work of FEMA through such initiatives as Project Impact.

Throughout the Panel's discussions, management and leadership issues at lower levels of the USFA/NFA were also discussed. Leaving their content aside for the moment, the *White Paper to the NFA Board of Visitors* (written by the Program Chairs of the National Fire Academy) and *Building a Fire Safe America: The Campaign for a Stronger USFA* (submitted by Local 1983, American Federation of Government Employees, FEMA) indicate serious internal problems regarding the confidence levels of staff in their leadership. The *White Paper*, for instance, cites FEMA's "organizational culture" as a contributing factor to NFA being in "critical condition." The Panel questions why these papers have a clandestine nature, and why people needed to go outside the official channels to be heard.

Both the *White Paper* and *Campaign for a Stronger USFA* were considered carefully by the Blue Ribbon Panel, as were commentary and reaction to each by officials of the USFA/NFA (including a report of the Board of Visitors of the NFA sent to the Director this past July). The Panel recognizes the efforts which went into each document, and appreciates the data and insights presented in each. It is the Panel's hope, however, that as improvements are made in USFA, the publication of papers such as these will not be necessary.

Recommendation # 6: The Blue Ribbon Panel urges the Fire Administrator to carefully consider the recommendations made by the Program Chairs of the National Fire Academy and Local 1983 of FEMA regarding the U.S. Fire Administration and its four program areas. It is recommended that management participate in ongoing dialog to enhance positive labor/management relations.

IV. Funding and Resource Management



**USFA Portion of FEMA
FY 1999 Budget**

Throughout its deliberations, the Panel expressed consistently its belief that if the federal fire programs administered by FEMA through the USFA are to be of any benefit or value, they must be properly funded. The current situation whereby fire programs are the recipient of only 5% (\$28.2 million) of

FEMA's operating budget must be re-examined.¹¹ Equally important, however, is the Blue Ribbon Panel's determination that additional funding must be tied to effective leadership and management. How well, for instance, would current leadership of the USFA prepare for substantial increases, given past performance, especially in the area of planning? Repeatedly it was noted by Panel members that "money fixes" produce short-term improvements. What is sought are long-term managerial improvements which will affect how program funds are utilized to the greatest potential.

The members of the Panel are convinced, nonetheless, that due to the momentum created by the Director last April at the Old Executive Office Building, that sufficient leadership and managerial changes will occur to justify budget enhancements. Therefore, the Panel suggests that the following series of recommendations be used as a starting point for funding reform of the USFA and its four program missions. A complete budget increase recommendation summary is attached to this report as Appendix D.

As has been stated previously, all four program areas under the direction of the USFA have been impacted by under-funding. Three programs in particular, Data Collection, Public Education and Awareness, and Research and Technology, have virtually no impact on the nation's fire problem because they are mere shadows of what they should be. The National Fire Academy, the jewel in USFA's crown, has survived under budget constraints due to the dedication and loyalty of management and staff. But, even the Academy seems to be at a breaking point where "doing more with less" is now impossible. The following suggestions, therefore, are intended to resuscitate the fire programs to a point where they are once again effective and trustworthy partners in the fire service community.

Data Collection Mission of USFA

An important responsibility of the federal government under the Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 is the public funding of a national fire data collection and analysis program. Its purpose is to monitor the fire problem in America and to aid decision makers in planning fire prevention and control priorities at the federal, state, and local levels and within private sector organizations.



¹¹FY 1999 FEMA budget request: *Funding by Budget Activity*. This figure does not include \$2.6 billion to support FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund.

This federal mandate resulted in development of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). This system and its resulting data have provided invaluable information on fire causes and contributing factors that have helped guide our nation's response to the fire problem. NFIRS data, for example, defined the need for more child-resistant cigarette lighters, demonstrated the value of home smoke alarms and sprinklers, revealed the jump in heating equipment home fires after the oil crisis of the late 1970s, and documented the even larger drop in those fires in response to widespread and intensive public education programs.

From its beginning, NFIRS has been dependent upon a strong federal, state, and local partnership, with state and local fire service agencies and federal agencies like the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, aided by private sector input and support from organizations such as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Unfortunately, USFA financial support for NFIRS has not kept up with current needs. Renewed financial support to the states and to local fire departments (the sources of the data) is needed to shore up existing state participation, to regain states which have dropped out of NFIRS, to reinforce badly eroded quality control provisions, and to convert hardware/software capabilities at the state level to handle a recently developed, more modern "Version 5" NFIRS system.

In addition, USFA should enter into cooperative agreements with existing public and private sector sources to analyze NFIRS data and report on the nation's fire problem. USFA should review proposed plans to expand USFA fire analysis staff. If outsourcing were achievable, this would avoid possible pointless duplication while allowing scarce USFA resources to be spent on improving and preserving NFIRS, the source of the data and the one element where USFA's role is most irreplaceable. Additional statisticians and economists at USFA would not be the best use of taxpayers money if NFIRS is allowed to continue to deteriorate. The services of statisticians can be "outsourced" easily enough through cooperative agreements, grants, and contracts.

Recommendation # 7: Increase USFA support (allocate resources and staffing) for new NFIRS Version 5 as follows:

7.1 Increase USFA assistance and quality assurance to new and existing

NFIRS states; support would include installing and testing new systems in each state and training state coordinators as well as providing support to state and local users as they convert to Version 5.

7.2 USFA would process and quality-control incoming data, generate state reports, and compile and distribute the annual data base.

7.3 Increase budget for NFIRS support at USFA by \$2 million per year.

7.4 Develop periodic grants to states to upgrade computer equipment to handle the new NFIRS Version 5 and to enhance analysis capabilities at an overall funding level of \$200,000 per year for the next several fiscal years to the designated state fire authority. Ten to twenty thousand dollar grants per state would upgrade all NFIRS states over a five-year period of conversion.¹²

7.5 USFA should outsource, when appropriate, most fire data analysis activities now carried out by USFA to describe the overall U.S. fire problem (e.g., "A Profile of Fire in the United States") and any special fire analysis or fire report projects. This should be done through cooperative agreements, contracts or grants at a level of \$250,000 per year.¹³

7.6 Regulation should be introduced requiring all states to report using the NFIRS system within five years. Future participation in USFA programs would be tied to participation in the NFIRS reporting system.

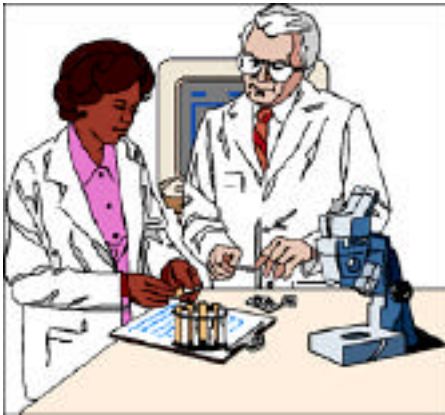
7.8 The Panel recommends that an additional \$2 million per year be put toward state grants for the marketing, training, and creation of incentives to ensure 100% NFIRS 5 participation.

¹² A similar grant program was administered by USFA during the original formative years of NFIRS.

¹³ The Panel concludes there are adequate private sector sources for these services, including those of the National Fire Protection Association, which regularly reports nearly all of the same information and more, and on a more timely basis.

Research and Development Mission of USFA

An important responsibility of the federal government under the Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 is the public funding of Research and Development (R&D) to advance the "state of the art" of fire safety.



In its first decade and a half, USFA sponsored numerous R&D projects to advance the state of the art. The subjects of this research included firefighter protective clothing and equipment, fast response residential sprinkler technology, and affordable smoke alarms, to mention only a few. The concept worked well and many USFA-sponsored R&D efforts resulted in substantial improvements in our nation's codes and standards, firefighter safety, and health and built-in fire protection, with a resulting reduction in fire

fatalities and losses. In recent years, however, R&D has not been a priority at the USFA and, in fact, has been zero-funded. Many of the original goals identified for the USFA in America Burning and P.L. 93-498 depended on an active research and development agenda.

Recommendation # 8: USFA should focus on a number of critical R&D tasks identified in Public Law 93-498, which are as important today as they were in 1974 and still have not been fully addressed. These include specifically:

8.1 The role of USFA as a proactive leader, helping set the direction for the entire national fire safety R&D agenda, in partnership with other research organizations and major users of research.

8.2 Invest much more heavily in technology R&D programs to support the fire safety community in the areas of:

- a. **firefighter health and safety**
- b. **advanced information technologies for fire management**
- c. **advanced technologies for fire prevention and protection**
- d. **advanced firefighting technologies**
- e. **burn care and rehabilitation¹⁴**

8.3 Provide leadership for the fire safety community in the transition to performance-based codes and standards. This role could include:

a. Financial support of fire service participation in R&D activities of voluntary codes and standards committees

b. Provide leadership and financial support to public and private academic institutions in support of degree and continuing education programs to equip fire safety professionals for active participation in use of performance-based regulations and standards

c. Support of research needed to address public interest concerns/issues associated with such codes and standards

Research in support of fire safety is central to USFA's mission. The key is USFA's role as the federal government's focus on fire safety. USFA is not the only user of fire safety research and is not a principal source of research, but USFA is uniquely qualified to help bridge the gap between research users and researchers, the latter being led by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) fire program. NIST specifically has repeatedly and continuously urged that this leadership role be re-established. Last year, the State Fire Marshals raised this issue in Congressional hearings, which resulted in a revised M.O.U. between NIST and USFA. But little has happened since that time. The potential for synergy between the missions of these agencies is tremendous, but the history is one of repeated missed opportunities.

¹⁴It is the Panel's hope that burn prevention research be coordinated with fire prevention research in an effort to reduce injury to the public and firefighters.

Recommendation # 9: USFA should make effective use of the capabilities in the National Institute of Standards and Technologies (NIST), Department of Commerce, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and other public and private sector organizations for R & D aimed at advancing the state of the art of fire safety in the nation.

Both NIST and the USFA have expressed a commitment to development of a National Agenda for Fire Research. It cannot be done by them alone. It cannot be done meaningfully by the fire services alone. The "National Fire Research Agenda" should be developed within the next six months in an open process resulting in recommended priorities for USFA, NIST, and other public and private sector interests in fire safety. Only then can the potential benefits and costs of the needed research be known and a meaningful effort to set priorities be undertaken. A step toward this occurred in October 1997 when a group of fire researchers met at the National Emergency Training Center to discuss and promulgate a National Fire Research Agenda.¹⁵ Their subsequent report identified research subjects and areas which, in the opinion of these experts, require support for on-going research (see Appendix E).

Recommendation # 10: The Panel recommends funding \$10 million per year to carry out these R&D initiatives plus an additional \$2 million for research grants to academic and other allied institutions.

Public Education & Awareness Mission of the USFA

Public Education and Awareness efforts by the USFA have, sadly, eroded to the point where this mission virtually no longer exists. Through partnerships and special initiatives, the USFA was mandated to assist the fire service, the media, other federal agencies and private sector safety interest groups in the "development and delivery of fire safety awareness and educational programs." Furthermore, these programs are to be targeted to communities most vulnerable to fire and those individuals at the greatest risk to be killed or injured in a fire-related incident. Public Education efforts have been

¹⁵ USFA Fire Research Agenda Meeting, Final Report, October 10, 1997.

reduced to the distribution of documents and, although some of these are very good and very important, the USFA's role in public education should be much more proactive, leveraging limited resources through partnerships with public and private sector organizations.¹⁶ Even though 1.2 million documents were distributed last year, this is an insufficient demonstration of commitment to the Public Education mission and lacks any method of measuring the effectiveness of such documents.



The Panel concluded that because the feed-back loop from data collection is operating at a sub-par level, this has had negative consequences for public education efforts. Because there is so much at stake, the Panel urges USFA take immediate steps to ensure

that the National Fire Data Center can collect fire data from all states and local jurisdictions. The Panel urges USFA to accept nothing less than 100% participation by all states in NFIRS 5.

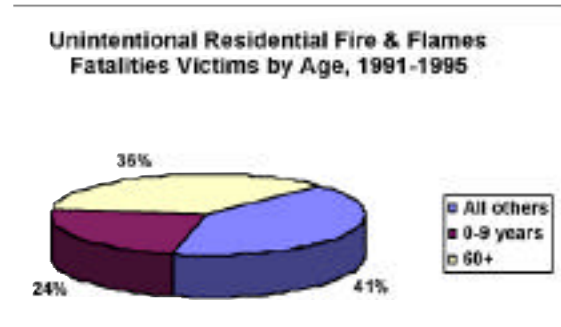
Public Education and Awareness initiatives by the USFA, as delineated in P.L. 93-498, are to focus especially on “those groups who are particularly vulnerable to fire hazards, such as the young and the old,” and in communities with populations under 2,500.¹⁷ A number of USFA budget documents indicate that funding for programs to work in these areas has virtually been eliminated since 1995. The Panel urges that any redevelopment of public education and awareness begin with attention to vulnerable communities and populations.

¹⁶ See, for example, *Fire Stops With You, Emergency Procedures for Employees with Disabilities in Office Occupancies*, and fire prevention efforts targeted at Native Americans.

¹⁷ The primary target audiences which correspond to this mandate include communities with populations under 2,500, children 0-9 years, seniors over 60, and African Americans. Source: *Building a Fire Safe America: Campaign for a Stronger USFA*.

Recommendation #11: It is recommended that the USFA increase its awareness of how diversity and multi-culturalism affect the fire problem through redirecting current resources and new funding toward specific at-risk populations.

11.1 Partner with representatives of cultural/ethnic groups to seek input and understanding regarding public education effectiveness and to develop new pathways for delivery.



11.2 Develop relationships with minority-owned corporations to co-develop fire prevention campaigns designed specifically for at-risk groups.

Unintentional Residential Fire & Flames Fatalities Victims by Age, 1991-1995

Recommendation #12: The Panel recommends that an additional \$4 million per year be directed to expand outreach efforts on community hazard assessment and at-risk groups, including technical assistance to fire departments serving populations under 2,500.

Recommendation # 13: Create a local matching funds federal grant program designed to fund the hiring of Public Fire & Safety Educators over the next three years with a focus on states with a documented high life loss history.

Training Mission of the USFA

The National Fire Academy, as has been demonstrated to the Blue Ribbon Panel, has been doing more with less for over a decade; it is now doing less with less. The National Fire Academy is grossly under-funded if it is to make the necessary improvements in staffing and programs which would truly impact on how fire service professionals in the United States are trained and educated at this level, in addition to serving other stakeholders as mandated in public law. The Academy is struggling with a

number of major issues, including the development and delivery of its programs and services to the greatest number of students, and its continuing relationship with the Emergency Management Institute (EMI).

The Panel is satisfied with, and accepts in general, the data presented in the White Paper and in comments made regarding the White Paper by reviewers, that there exist serious staffing and funding issues which are interfering with the training mission



of USFA.¹⁸ However, at the same time, there exist differing opinions on how the challenges facing the training mission of USFA should be solved. The Panel urges the USFA and NFA to reach consensus as to the appropriate number of staff and faculty to carry out its mission.

While the Panel recognized its responsibility to make suggestions regarding the National Fire Academy, it strongly recommends that Director Witt allocate the resources and staffing necessary to conduct a **separate in-depth study** regarding future directions for the National Fire Academy, particularly focusing on curriculum development, co-location with EMI, and service delivery systems. This effort should include a great deal of input from the State Fire Training Directors, universities, metropolitan fire training academies, and other major users of the National Fire Academy. Such a study should thoroughly explore the following problem areas, among others:

- Should EMI and NFA continue to share the Emmitsburg Facility? Are there more advantages or disadvantages to co-location?
- Why are over 3,300 students turned away on a yearly basis for resident courses?
- What are the advantages of a rigid two-week schedule for resident courses for NFA and one week courses for EMI when this creates housing difficulties for the entire institution?
- Are there other facility options, such as moving EMI to the Mt. Weather Emergency Assistance Center (Round Hill, VA)?

¹⁸ See the *Report of the Board of Visitors for the National Fire Academy* (July 22, 1998).

- Is the model currently utilized to hire instructors advantageous or disadvantageous to securing the best instructors?
- How could course development and review cycle be shortened and improved?
- Could more formal partnerships with colleges and universities expand NFA influence upon how the fire problem is studied in the United States.
- How could the NFA develop a strategy to diversify its student population?

Regardless of whether this separate study goes forward, funding the NFA must increase. Additional funding must be sought to increase student capacity at the Emmitsburg facility, to ensure the continuation of student manual support, and to develop improved delivery pathways via the state training programs, universities, metro training academies, schools of architecture and other professional avenues. Currently, the states train many more students locally than the NFA does directly at Emmitsburg. Several individual states, as a matter of fact, train a greater number of students annually and have more faculty and staff than the National Fire Academy.

In FY 1997, 5,301 individuals attended NFA courses and 5,179 attended EMI courses at the National Emergency Training Center in Emmitsburg. Additionally, in FY 1997, NFA reached 10,199 individuals with training provided by the Academy and sponsored by state and local fire training agencies. For each of the last four fiscal years (1994-1997), an average 3,300 qualified individuals per year have been unable to attend a requested course at the NFA because the course was full.

What is interesting is that the student capacity at NETC is evenly divided between NFA and EMI—approximately 220 rooms each. However, the population of potential students for the fire courses (1.2 million) is substantially greater than for EMI courses. Fire students are restricted to one program per year, while EMI students have the opportunity to attend on multiple occasions. It appears that FEMA admission and facility policies favor the needs of the EMI students above those of the NFA. Resident program space should be allocated based upon demonstrated need and demand.

It cannot be overemphasized how important the partnership is between the state training programs, universities and other stakeholders and the NFA. For example, more than a few state training agencies only teach NFA courses. It is critical that delivery sys-

tems to the states be more efficient and that courses reach the states in a shorter time period. For the NFA to maintain the role envisioned by *America Burning*, all new federally funded initiatives that involve training firefighters for any function including USAR, terrorism, etc. should be coordinated with USFA/NFA.

Recommendation #14: The Panel recommends that the NFA budget be increased in order to increase student capacity by 50%, to improve off-campus course delivery, and to ensure that all first responders have access to the excellent courses that have been and can be developed by the staff of the National Fire Academy through continuation of the student manual support and utilization of the resources at the Learning Resource Center (LRC).

14.1 The Panel recommends that an additional 110 rooms (plus supporting facilities) be made available for resident program students of the NFA. This can be accomplished by a capital construction project or relocate EMI to another FEMA facility, thereby freeing up space at the NFA for additional students.

14.2 In order to increase the student capacity by 50% an additional \$2.5 million in operating funds is required for additional faculty and staff, course development and delivery costs, and increased student stipends.

14.3 Increased funding for student manual support be maintained for at least five years as the programs are handed off to the various states.

14.4 The Learning Resource Center (LRC) be staffed and open for reasonable hours (including evenings and weekends) whenever students are on campus.

14.5 The NFA should recognize the benefits of having a diverse student population participate in their courses. Therefore, the admission process of the NFA should be strengthened to enhance the numbers of women and ethnic group members participating in the various programs.

Recommendation 15: The Academy should consider a very limited time when basic courses (i.e., arson investigation, inspection practices, basic Haz Mat, etc.) are taught at Emmitsburg. These should be handed off to the states, with residential courses focusing on executive-level management, advanced technology and those focusing on the introduction of new ideas into the fire service.

Recommendation # 16: State and local fire training programs are an integral component of the training and educational services of the NFA. In order to maintain and strengthen this important partnership, grants to support state fire training programs need to be improved. The grants should be in the \$100,000 range per state as follows:

- **\$75,000** - To deliver NFA courses at the state level, including program materials and delivery costs.

- **\$25,000** - (.5 FTE) to coordinate delivery of NFA programs at the state and local level and to provide for the management and accountability of NFA courses.

This will allow for the state training programs to conduct more NFA courses per year and encourage student participation. This is especially important for volunteer firefighters who may not have the opportunity to attend the resident courses at the NFA due to work commitments. Additionally, this may relieve some of the demand for NFA resident courses.

In addition, the Panel urges the management of FEMA/USFA and NFA to recognize the NFA Board of Visitors (BOV) as a valuable resource to support this mission of the United States Fire Administration. The Board should be actively involved in providing meaningful counsel in its areas of responsibility. If the direction of the Board were sought early and regularly, decision making by FEMA/USFA management could be more informed on NFA issues.

Public Law 93-498 created a Board of Visitors to oversee the operations of the NFA and to issue an annual report to Congress. Until recently, the BOV met four times a year. However, this was reduced to two meetings recently which has greatly reduced the Board's ability to review programs and procedures of the National Fire Academy. This is a serious problem underlying BOV-NFA relations, among others.

For instance, BOV travel funds come from NFA's travel budget, competing with travel money that staff would be able to use of educational enhancements. This creates a conflict at the organizational level as to what is more important: staff travel to improve performance, or BOV travel to evaluate the work of the NFA staff.

Perhaps because of this conflict, or others, the Board of Visitors has had difficulty obtaining the most complete information needed to make informed decisions. Many times this information has been filtered by staff prior to reaching the Board of Visitors.

Recommendation # 17: The Panel recommends to the Director that he evaluate policies currently affecting the Board of Visitors to ensure that the BOV is permitted to operate as it was intended.

17.1 Funds budgeted for the BOV travel and meetings should be separate from the salary and expenses of the USFA/NFA.

17.2 The staff person assigned to work with the BOV should be a staff member from the FEMA Director's office and not from USFA.

17.3 The Board should be funded for a minimum of four meetings per year.

V. Planning

In order for any organization to travel forward in an effective and efficient manner, there must exist a strategic plan which provides a map to the destination of organizational goals. Said more simply, "How can you know you've arrived if you don't know where you are going?" The strategic planning effort must engage in an inclusive process

of stakeholders in a desire to reach consensus not only on goals and objectives, but also consensus on the methodology for reaching those achievements. Further, the synergy of stakeholder planning can and should propel an organization forward through the challenges of limited resources because the process encourages creative solutions and the prioritization of activities.

The strategic plan for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, "Partnership for a Safer Future," encompasses planning from FY 1998 through FY 2007, with Operational Objectives through FY 2003. While the document is exemplary with regard to a comprehensive approach to disaster management, it is deficient with respect to planning regarding response to the nation's fire and EMS problems. Indeed, only two of the 5-Year Operational Objectives, out of thirty-six objectives, were assigned to the United States Fire Administration.¹⁹ Although the document only minimally mentions planning issues for fire and EMS, it does acknowledge that the cumulative loss of life and property from fire "far exceeds that of all other natural disasters combined" and that "the United States historically has had one of the highest fire loss rates of the industrialized world—both in fire deaths and dollar loss." (Page 6, *Partnership for a Safer Future*). These statements are incongruent given the absence of fire/EMS emphasis in the plan. It is perhaps this lack of integration of fire and EMS issues that led to the original absence of first responders in the planning for Project Impact and may have detracted from other initiatives as well.

Recommendation #18: The Panel recommends that planning within FEMA more substantively incorporate the goals and objectives of the fire and EMS constituencies in this country, recognizing the fire/EMS system as the primary mitigation and prevention infrastructure in service to the citizens.



¹⁹ The first is to reduce "by 5% the rate of loss of life and property from fire and fire-related hazards." and the second is to "improve by 15% the efficiency with which USFA delivers its services."

A strategic plan is needed for the USFA and the NFA that works in concert with planning at FEMA. Planning submitted to FEMA from the USFA and NFA should be well coordinated between the organizations so that it is not segmented nor duplicative. The USFA and NFA strategic plans should value and include extensive stakeholder input. When stakeholder input is solicited and then ignored, a sense of frustration will likely be experienced among the stakeholders.

Recommendation #19: As a starting point for revitalization, it is strongly recommended that the USFA develop a strategic plan utilizing valuable stakeholder contributions that have already been made and others which will be sought directly.

Strategic Plans for USFA and NFA can balance the quest for excellence, while acknowledging the budget realities of downsized government. Efficient planning should enhance resource utilization and reduce waste. (For example, better planning at the National Fire Academy could reduce the waste incurred when EMI classes lasting only one week leave vacant a block of rooms for the second week because the NFA classes run for two weeks.)

Efficient strategic planning is based on the ability to prioritize and then actually emphasize the attainment of goals in the high priority zone. In addition to focus on priorities, there must be developed a methodology for accepting fast track assignments, so that the demand for new subject matter and course material will not precipitate a crisis in resources and staffing, nor shut down other projects.

Recommendation # 20: Effective Strategic Plans have to be realistic, measurable and achievable. USFA should ensure that it can meet the two goals established in FEMA strategic plan regarding the fire programs (see footnote 19).

In addition to planning within the USFA, planning between FEMA and the USFA needs to be harmonized at all points of contact. The Panel suggests that the leadership of FEMA seek opportunities for joint project development and implementation. Shared decision making and planning should also decrease fear and anxiety among staff by increasing the trust they need to have in their own agencies and through the development of policies with respect to human resource requirements for staff.

Research is also intended to support fire service organizations in their critical role as first responders. They also need the technologies to effectively support businesses and building owners at the local level in applying available and new disaster and terrorism mitigation technologies. This is a major Presidential initiative and there are specific budgetary proposals in the FY99 budgets.

Very importantly, the fire service must be elevated in terms of policy decisions regarding terrorism planning and in all response efforts more generally. There is currently a great deal of confusion about the coordination of terrorism response policy, as well as a very fragmented approach regarding the funding of terrorism research. The Departments of Justice and Defense, as well as FEMA, are important players in this arena, yet there is little coordination and much duplication of effort. While money is becoming available for this effort, there appears to be no logical method for making funds available where they would do the most good—at the state and local levels. This coordinated effort must include first responders as well as law enforcement and post-disaster contingents. The Blue Ribbon Panel strongly urges the Director of FEMA to ensure that the fire service is at the table when terrorism strategies are discussed and coordinated at the federal level.

This is only one example of appropriate opportunities for USFA partnership with allied organizations on larger problems that include fire, such as unintentional injuries, hazardous material and emergency medical incidents, and the already noted natural disasters.

Recommendation # 21: The USFA needs to be an active partner and have a proactive role in the National Disaster & Terrorism Response effort. The Panel recommends that \$15 million be appropriated for this effort.

VI. Personnel and Human Resource Issues

During its deliberations, the Panel was the recipient of letters and position papers regarding personnel issues at USFA and its Fire Training Academy which caused great concern. When examined closely, it appears that staffing shortages, particularly at NFA lie at the root of many difficulties. Allowing for the fact that all agencies in federal government were directed to become smaller (via the National Performance Review and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993), it's still hard to understand how

staffing at the NFA has shrunk to its recent number of 39 FTEs. That one individual is responsible for management of the current NFIRS system plus the development of NFIRS 5 demonstrates an institution under a debilitating staffing shortage.²⁰



Recommendation # 22: The Panel recommends that staffing levels at the NFA be established at the appropriate level, through the adoption of the budget recommendations made in this report, and in a separate study regarding NFA.

The Panel further suggests that the staff of the USFA not be transferred when shortages occur at FEMA, as seems to be suggested in several of the documents reviewed, without being replaced with temporary employees, when appropriate. Likewise, the assignment of additional duties to NFA staff on the magnitude of the National Arson Prevention Initiative and the curriculum for terrorism courses without the addition of FTEs is unacceptable. Currently, the NFA staff has reached its capacity, and to suggest that it, in addition, prepare for major initiatives (e.g. designing a new regional delivery system for NFA courses) should be reviewed. Again, the Panel asks Director Witt to consider that the NFA customer base includes members of over 32,000 U.S. fire departments (1.2 million firefighters).

Aside from staffing shortages, the Panel was asked to consider several internal staffing problems that seem to exist at USFA/NFA. For instance, at several points during its meetings, it became apparent that more emphasis on conflict resolution and creative problem-solving would help both the USFA and its National Fire Academy move forward. It often appears that important players in the FEMA/USFA/NFA triad are not effectively communicating and resolving their differences in a timely manner.

²⁰ Local 1983 report.

Recommendation #23: The Panel recommends that an interest-based conflict resolution system be developed and used by these three groups during points of impasse and during all negotiations about the future concerning mission and resource allocation.



As well as determining a mechanism for resolving conflicts, the USFA must confront the issue of decision making for the organization at large. Internally, it appears to employees that decisions about the future are made only when a crisis is imminent. It would appear that the Fire Administration has no agreed-upon format for discussing programmatic goals and for making choices about how to implement objectives. Having a model for introducing information onto the USFA agenda would be enormously helpful for the entire organization and provide it with a shield when unanticipated requests are made.

Recommendation # 24: The Panel recommends that the staff of the USFA develop a decision making model which is well-integrated throughout the Fire Administration.

The Panel urges that staff increases to USFA and its National Fire Academy proceed quickly and that present and future employees be given the proper environment in which to achieve success. In addition, the Panel also advocates that the introduction of new management techniques and professional development be made available to USFA/NFA through the creation of training opportunities.

Recommendation #25: Train staff at all levels to be effective managers in skills they identify as critical to job performance (e.g., teamwork, empowerment, etc.)

VII. Advocacy and Partnership



Blue Ribbon Panel members were impressed with the level of commitment displayed throughout its review period by both USFA staff, employees and other stakeholders. In addition, several letters reached the Panel, hoping to influence the creation of a better and stronger USFA.

Central to its re-creation will be USFA's ability to reclaim the trust and loyalty of its fire service constituents. It can do this first and foremost through the design of products and services which will be of genuine use to first responders. Information about the nation's fire problem coming from the National Fire Data Center must be available in a timely manner.²¹ Likewise, the USFA and its National Fire Academy must make use of technology and incorporate it into both its products and service delivery systems. Headway has already been made in this direction as evidenced by USFA's excellent web site. This is a fine source of information for those interested in learning more about the fire problem. In a similar vein, the availability of the Learning Resource Center catalog on-line is enormously helpful to fire researchers and students.

Recommendation #26: The Panel recommends that the USFA continue outreach programs for the dissemination of information about fire problems in the United States and that it strive to ensure that all data is current and presented in user-friendly format. The USFA should utilize existing public and private sector resources wherever possible through partnership agreements to achieve this objective.

In addition to reclaiming its constituent partners, USFA must reach out to institutional stakeholders for support and cooperative advancement. As was noted previously, more NFA courses are taught through state fire training agencies than in Emmitsburg. Yet, a recent conflict over the distribution of student manuals to the state users threatened the viability of training on the state level. Similarly, there are dozens of college and university programs offering degrees or certificates in fire science or fire management.

²¹ The latest reference book on the fire problem is from 1995.

These institutions are looking toward the USFA/NFA for course development and program content. All U.S. fire service agencies need leadership from the national fire programs on both content and direction for their programs. In the words of a former America Burning Commission member, the USFA “needs to be a beacon, not a taillight.” If the USFA does not provide leadership, parts of its mission will be assumed by other interest groups and organizations, but essential elements such as the collection of NFIRS data cannot be met by any other existing organization.



Recommendation #27: The Panel urges the USFA and its National Fire Academy to consider the ramifications of what it does for its institutional partners and provide increased support for “Degrees at a Distance” and other fire service college curriculum programs.

Many constituent groups in the fire service community believe that USFA has abdicated its important role as an interpreter and defender of fire/EMS issues. This perception comes at great expense to USFA because it will continue to lose the respect of its constituency if deterioration of programs proceed at the current pace. As has been mentioned previously in the sections of this report concerning Mission and Planning, the belief that FEMA has abandoned the fire programs will be a strong perception to overcome. But this core problem must be addressed by both USFA and FEMA if either wishes to move the fire agenda forward.

Recommendation #28: At all points, FEMA must inject a consciousness of the fire problem into its programs and outward into federal government policy whenever appropriate, especially in the area of health care, occupational safety and health, DOT standards, etc. Congressional liaison from FEMA to Congress must develop a feed-back loop to the fire service.

Recommendation #29: In order to promote loyalty and demonstrate advocacy, the Panel urges that the FEMA Director sponsor an annual meeting of representative stakeholder interests regarding fire concerns and issues similar to that conducted on behalf of the emergency management community.

To ensure that USFA is the voice of national fire service concerns and positions, the Panel urges the USFA to take a more active role in disseminating information to the public, beyond traditional public education efforts. Currently, fire service leaders, from fire department managers to the directors of professional organizations, do not turn to the USFA for information and guidance.

Recommendation # 30: The Panel recommends that FEMA/USFA develop fellowships for senior fire officers at the local level whereby they would serve under the highest levels of FEMA/USFA administrators for six month periods. This would strengthen the connections between FEMA/USFA to fire leaders in the field and give senior USFA personnel regular input from local leaders on needs, perceptions, ideas and problem-solving. In turn, this would begin to build a cadre of fire officers across the nation with intimate working knowledge of the federal fire programs—officers who would then be a resource/talent pool during major national emergencies.

Recommendation # 31: In order to improve the effectiveness of USFA developments at the local level, the Panel urges the creation of a federal grant/local matching programs to enable fire/EMS departments to acquire training resources, new technology, specialized equipment and safety resources.

Recommendation # 32: Ensure when there is a major fire, large-scale explosion or similar event that warrants national media coverage that the USFA be a more visible advocate, provide commentary, provide data, interpretation and analysis in support of local fire authorities.

As well as disseminating information, the USFA should be doing more on the international scene to promote the programs and activities it develops and distributes. International partnerships between the USFA and the official fire agencies of other countries would improve program design in the United States through the introduction of new ideas and materials. For example, the exporting of technology and equipment to Latin America would create opportunities for American manufacturers as well as improve fire protection systems in those nations.



Recommendation #33: Recognize that the study of the U.S. fire problem could benefit from examining success models elsewhere and that the USFA should have a major role in brokering an international flow of information on such issues as technology development, training initiatives, and cultural aspects of fire prevention.

VIII. Concerns About the Future

Virtually all of the issues raised in the letters to Director Witt regarding the future of the USFA have been addressed in this report. Individuals questioning the usefulness of the USFA/NFA in the future were concerned about the soundness of leadership, the availability of resources, and whether or not FEMA was sufficiently attached to the fire programs to provide the care and guidance they need to sustain transformation. The fire service is speaking with one voice—USFA and NFA represent the federal emphasis placed on fire service challenges at the national level. This emphasis must be elevated and the central importance of the fire service recognized throughout all segments of the federal government responsible for public safety.

The Panel is confident that the majority of key issues regarding the future of the FEMA/USFA/NFA relationship have been explored, whether or not all levels of concern are expressed in this particular report. It was the Panel's belief, in almost all cases, to leave implementation steps towards a new USFA to the people who have the greatest responsibility for its success—its managers, employees, and direct stakeholders.²² The future in this case, as in every case, has been left to the people who will live it. This Panel has concerned itself with the provision of tools in order to make a better future possible for the USFA. If this opportunity passes without substantial improvement, then the FEMA Director, USFA Administrator, and the fire programs they manage will have allowed a historic reinvention opportunity to pass.

²² In addition to the recommendations cited in this report, the USFA is responsible for meeting its Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) goals. USFA GPRA goals for FY 2000 are attached as Appendix F.

Conclusion

A recurring theme during the discussions of the Blue Ribbon Panel was anxiety that this report would focus solely on negative aspects of the fire programs while taking for granted all the positive contributions the USFA has made to our society. In particular, the Panel would like to note that:

- In large part, the improvements which have occurred in this country's fire profile have been due to the early research and data collection efforts of the United States Fire Administration. Every American who has a smoke detector in his home or who stays in a fire-safe hotel while away from home is indebted to USFA.
- Every firefighter, fire officer, and allied professional who has been trained at the National Fire Academy or who has taken an NFA course at a state training agency is better prepared to fulfill his/her duties.
- Every firefighter in the United States is safer on the job due to the research and technological advancements made by the USFA in personal protective equipment.
- As a memorial to firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty, the USFA founded a permanent remembrance through the National Fallen Firefighter's Memorial located on the NETC campus in Emmitsburg where a memorial service is held every October. The Memorial is now maintained by the National Fallen Fire Fighters Memorial Foundation.
- Fire researchers throughout the United States use the resources located in the Learning Research Center and Technical Reports obtained from the National Fire Data Center, all of which have been of inestimable value. The USFA's Internet presence is growing and should be an important factor to all research efforts in the future.



- Thousands of volunteer firefighters across the United States have benefited from State weekend programs and the NFA Volunteer Incentive Program.

The Panel urges the USFA to take the lead in a study to understand the nature of the fire problem in the United States at the beginning of the next and to renew its emphasis on addressing the loss of life and property from destructive and often unnecessary fires. This important data could be used as input for retooling the federal fire programs in their quest to serve the American people, and in an increased understanding regarding the ever-expanding roles of local fire authorities. It is the Panel's wish that as soon as data begins to flow into the Administration, that judicious use be made of it—beginning with a fire safety campaign featuring the FEMA Director. If the Director were to become recognized as this nation's fire prevention leader, opportunities for dramatically reducing the fire problem in the United States would be greatly enhanced.

Recommendation #34: As a starting point for rebuilding, the Panel requests that the Director, Congress and President of the United States create a commission to continue the work begun in America Burning. Due to the continuing seriousness of the fire problem in the United States, the Blue Ribbon Panel suggests this body begin its work in Washington, D.C. in June of 1999 and complete its work in eighteen months time.

Appendix A

Funding Appropriated in Public Law for the National Fire Prevention and Control Administration/United States Fire Administration, 1980-1992*

Fiscal Year	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Public Law Appropriation	10,000,000	15,000,000	15,000,000	20,000,000	24,352,000	25,210,000
Actual						24,341,000

Fiscal Year	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1987
Public Law Appropriation	23,814,000	20,815,000	23,312,800	15,720,000	20,983,000	18,300,000
Actual	18,183,000	17,596,000	13,310,000	15,023,000	19,097,000	15,502,000

Fiscal Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Public Law Appropriation	17,039,000	17,737,000	18,464,000	25,550,000	26,521,000	27,529,000
Actual	15,994,000	16,583,000	21,898,000	23,800,000		

* FEMA reorganized in 1993. As part of that reorganization, FEMA streamlined the budget submission process and several line items were eliminated. Due to the streamlining process, the USFA budget has been submitted by divisions rather than down to the branch level, therefore, with less detail. USFA program officers have not tracked the budget to the Branch level since 1993. USFA was unable to provide the actual funding figures from 1975-1979.

The point remains, however, that the USFA has not received adequate funding. Moreover, it has rarely received the full amount of the funds appropriated.

Appendix B

List of Recommendations

Recommendations about Mission

Recommendation # 1: The Panel endorses the mission statements of both FEMA and the USFA regarding their sensitivity to the nation's fire problem, but suggests that the National Fire Academy develop a mission statement that more accurately describes the importance of its training and educational activities for the fire service and the resulting benefits for the public.

1.1 FEMA, USFA and NFA should revisit their mission statements regularly to ensure that each is responding to the fire problems to the best of their capabilities and that the concerns of their fire service and allied professional constituents remain prominent.

Recommendation #2: Demonstrate the importance of fire safety by renaming FEMA the Fire and Emergency Management Agency.

2.1 Use the occasion of the name change to demonstrate loyalty and commitment to the fire service community and promote fire issues to the public at large.

Recommendation about Organizational Structure

Recommendation #3: The panel recommends that the reporting relationships between the United States Fire Administrator, the Deputy Fire Administrator, and the Superintendent of the National Fire Academy be redefined so that these working relationships can be improved in terms of empowerment, delegation of authority, and accountability.

3.1 Determine if the current system of the Superintendent and the Deputy Administrator both reporting directly to the Fire Administrator is one which best encourages the flow of information toward positive and productive outcomes.

3.2 USFA should demonstrate a willingness and eagerness to reconfigure reporting relationships if they are not understood or not working efficiently.

Recommendations about Leadership and Management

Recommendation # 4: The current United States Fire Administration does not have the confidence of the fire and emergency services. The Panel recommends that the FEMA Director and/or the Fire Administrator take the following actions:

4.1 Demonstrate a higher and sustained level of understanding about fire and emergency services issues through an advocacy at the federal level of those challenges

facing fire and EMS managers through vigorous justification of USFA program goals and objectives.

4.2 Increase visibility at emergencies where a federal response is necessary to demonstrate that fire and EMS personnel are America's first responders to all hazards and as such deserve the same interest and funding that FEMA has shown to the emergency management sector.

4.3 Relocate the office of the USFA Administration, including staff, to the Washington, D.C., headquarters of FEMA in order to be a constant advocate of fire issues, especially during budget and resource negotiations. The Panel suggests, however, that the staff of the National Fire Academy remain in Emmitsburg.

4.4 FEMA must develop a job description for the United States Fire Administrator which lists the qualities and attributes of an effective administrator, including performance objectives and standards. It is strongly encouraged that these attributes include demonstrated professional ability in fire and rescue disciplines.

Recommendation # 5: The leadership and organizational culture of FEMA must change by altering its views of fire and EMS issues in order to make programmatic changes which reflect the real impact of fire related hazards and emergencies (in terms of deaths, injuries and impact on the American economy) which greatly exceed those associated with large-scale natural disasters.

5.1 Include USFA Administrator in decisions of all FEMA's directorates as USFA fire and EMS customers represent those who are first responders in the field to FEMA's initiatives.

5.2 Create opportunities for interaction between the federal, state and local emergency managers and fire service managers to coordinate activities regarding risk identification and mitigation efforts.

5.3 Partner with the fire service in supporting changes on the level of those directed toward the emergency managers: make FIRE a part of FEMA through increasing the role of the USFA in FEMA.

5.4 Recognize that the fire service model of risk reduction through prevention efforts has created the finest emergency services infrastructure in the world and use these professionals to further the work of FEMA through such initiatives as Project Impact.

Recommendation # 6: The Blue Ribbon Panel urges the Fire Administrator to carefully consider the recommendations made by the Program Chairs of the National Fire Academy and Local 1983 of FEMA regarding the U.S. Fire Administration and its four pro-

gram areas. It is recommended that management participate in ongoing dialog to enhance positive labor/management relations.

Recommendations about Funding and Resource Management

Recommendation # 7: Increase USFA support (allocate resources and staffing) for new NFIRS Version 5 as follows:

7.1 Increase USFA assistance and quality assurance to new and existing NFIRS states; support would include installing and testing new systems in each state and training state coordinators as well as providing support to state and local users as they convert to Version 5.

7.2 USFA would process and quality-control incoming data, generate state reports, and compile and distribute the annual data base.

7.3 Increase budget for NFIRS support at USFA by \$2 million per year.

7.4 Develop periodic grants to states to upgrade computer equipment to handle the new NFIRS Version 5 and to enhance analysis capabilities at an overall funding level of \$200,000 per year for the next several fiscal years to the designated state fire authority. Ten to twenty thousand dollar grants per state would upgrade all NFIRS states over a five-year period of conversion.

7.5 USFA should outsource, when appropriate, most fire data analysis activities now carried out by USFA to describe the overall U.S. fire problem (e.g., "A Profile of Fire in the United States") and any special fire analysis or fire report projects. This should be done through cooperative agreements, contracts or grants at a level of \$250,000 per year.

7.6 Regulation should be introduced requiring all states to report using the NFIRS system within five years. Future participation in USFA programs would be tied to participation in the NFIRS reporting system.

7.7 The Panel recommends that an additional \$2 million per year be put toward state grants for the marketing, training, and creation of incentives to ensure 100% NFIRS 5 participation.

Recommendation # 8: USFA should focus on a number of critical R&D tasks identified in Public Law 93-498, which are as important today as they were in 1974 and still have not been fully addressed. These include specifically:

8.1 The role of USFA as a proactive leader, helping set the direction for the entire national fire safety R&D agenda, in partnership with other research organizations and major users of research.

8.2 Invest much more heavily in technology R&D programs to support the fire safety community in the areas of:

- a. firefighter health and safety
- b. advanced information technologies for fire management
- c. advanced technologies for fire prevention and protection
- d. advanced firefighting technologies
- e. burn care and rehabilitation

8.3 Provide leadership for the fire safety community in the transition to performance-based codes and standards. This role could include:

- a. Financial support of fire service participation in R&D activities of voluntary codes and standards committees
- b. Provide leadership and financial support to public and private academic institutions in support of degree and continuing education programs to equip fire safety professionals for active participation in use of performance-based regulations and standards
- f. Support of research needed to address public interest concerns/issues associated with such codes and standards

Recommendation # 9: USFA should make effective use of the capabilities in the National Institute of Standards and Technologies (NIST), Department of Commerce, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and other public and private sector organizations for R & D aimed at advancing the state of the art of fire safety in the nation.

Recommendation # 10: The Panel recommends funding \$10 million per year to carry out these R&D initiatives plus an additional \$2 million for research grants to academic and other allied institutions.

Recommendation #11: It is recommended that the USFA increase its awareness of how diversity and multi-culturalism affect the fire problem through redirecting current resources and new funding toward specific at-risk populations.

11.1 Partner with representatives of cultural/ethnic groups to seek input and understanding regarding public education effectiveness and to develop new pathways for delivery.

11.2 Develop relationships with minority-owned corporations to co-develop fire prevention campaigns designed specifically for at-risk groups.

Recommendation #12: The Panel recommends that an additional \$4 million per year be directed to expand outreach efforts on community hazard assessment and at-risk groups, including technical assistance to fire departments serving populations under 2,500.

Recommendation # 13: Create a local matching funds federal grant program designed to fund the hiring of Public Fire & Safety Educators over the next three years with a focus on states with a documented high life loss history.

Recommendation #14: The Panel recommends that the NFA budget be increased in order to increase student capacity by 50%, to improve off-campus course delivery, and to ensure that all first responders have access to the excellent courses that have been and can be developed by the staff of the National Fire Academy through continuation of the student manual support and utilization of the resources at the Learning Resource Center (LRC).

14.1 The Panel recommends that an additional 110 rooms (plus supporting facilities) be made available for resident program students of the NFA. This can be accomplished by a capital construction project or relocate EMI to another FEMA facility, thereby freeing up space at the NFA for additional students.

14.2 In order to increase the student capacity by 50% an additional \$2.5 million in operating funds is required for additional faculty and staff, course development and delivery costs, and increased student stipends.

14.3 Increased funding for student manual support be maintained for at least five years as the programs are handed off to the various states.

14.4 The Learning Resource Center (LRC) be staffed and open for reasonable hours (including evenings) whenever students are on campus.

14.5 The NFA shall recognize the benefits of having a diverse student population participate in their courses. Therefore, the admission process of the NFA should be strengthened to enhance the numbers of women and ethnic group members participating in the various programs.

Recommendation 15: The Academy should consider a very limited time when basic courses (i.e., arson investigation, inspection practices, basic Haz Mat, etc.) are taught at Emmitsburg. These should be handed-off to the states, with residential courses focusing on executive-level management, advanced technology and those focusing on the introduction of new ideas into the fire service.

Recommendation # 16: State and local fire training programs are an integral component of the training and educational services of the NFA. In order to maintain and strengthen this important partnership, grants to support state fire training programs need to be improved. The grants should be in the \$100,000 range per state, as follows:

- \$75,000 - To deliver NFA courses at the state level, including program materials and delivery costs.
- \$25,000 - (.5 FTE) to coordinate delivery of NFA programs at the state and local level and to provide for the management and accountability of NFA courses.

Recommendation # 17: The Panel recommends to the Director that he evaluate policies currently affecting the Board of Visitors to ensure that the BOV is permitted to operate as it was intended.

17.1 Funds budgeted for the BOV travel and meetings should be separate from the salary and expenses of the USFA/NFA.

17.2 The staff person assigned to work with the BOV should be a staff member from the FEMA Director's office and not from USFA.

17.3 The Board should be funded for a minimum of four meetings per year.

Recommendations about Planning

Recommendation #18: The Panel recommends that planning within FEMA more substantively incorporate the goals and objectives of the fire and EMS constituencies in this country, recognizing the fire/EMS system as the primary mitigation and prevention infrastructure in service to the citizens.

Recommendation #19: As a starting point for revitalization, it is strongly recommended that the USFA develop a strategic plan utilizing valuable stakeholder contributions that have already been made and others which will be sought directly.

Recommendation # 20: Effective Strategic Plans have to be realistic, measurable and achievable. USFA should ensure that it can meet the two goals established in FEMA's strategic plan regarding the fire programs.

Recommendation # 21: The USFA needs to be an active partner and have a proactive role in the National Disaster & Terrorism Response effort, and that \$15 million be appropriated for this effort.

Recommendations about Personnel and Human Resource Issues

Recommendation # 22: The Panel recommends that staffing levels at the NFA be established at the appropriate level, through the adoption of the budget recommendations made in this report, and in a separate study regarding NFA.

Recommendation #23: The Panel recommends that an interest-based conflict resolution system be developed and used by these three groups during points of impasse and during all negotiations about the future concerning mission and resource allocation.

Recommendation # 24: The Panel recommends that the staff of the USFA develop a decision making model which is well-integrated throughout the Fire Administration.

Recommendation #25: Train staff at all levels to be effective managers in skills they identify as critical to job performance (e.g., teamwork ,empowerment, etc.)

Recommendations about Advocacy and Partnership

Recommendation #26: The Panel recommends that the USFA continue outreach programs for the dissemination of information about fire problems in the United States and that it strive to ensure that all data is current and presented in user-friendly format. The USFA should utilize existing public and private sector resources wherever possible through partnership agreements to achieve this objective.

Recommendation #27: The Panel urges the USFA and its National Fire Academy to consider the ramifications of what it does for its institutional partners and provide increased support for “Degrees at a Distance” and other fire service college curriculum programs.

Recommendation #28: At all points, FEMA must inject a consciousness of the fire problem into its programs and outward into federal government policy whenever appropriate, especially in the area of health care, occupational safety and health, DOT standards, etc. Congressional liaison from FEMA to Congress must develop a feed-back loop to the fire service.

Recommendation #29: In order to promote loyalty and demonstrate advocacy, the Panel urges that the FEMA Director sponsor an annual meeting of representative stakeholder interests regarding fire concerns and issues similar to that conducted on behalf of the emergency management community.

Recommendation # 30: The Panel recommends that FEMA/USFA develop fellowships for senior fire officers at the local level whereby they would serve under the highest levels of FEMA/USFA administrators for six month periods. This would strengthen the connections between FEMA/USFA to fire leaders in the field and give senior USFA personnel regular input from local leaders on needs, perceptions, ideas and problem-solving. In turn, this would begin to build a cadre of fire officers across the nation with intimate working knowledge of the federal fire programs—officers who would then be a resource/talent pool during major national emergencies.

Recommendation # 31: In order to improve the effectiveness of USFA developments at the local level, the Panel urges the creation of a federal grant/local matching programs to enable fire/EMS departments to acquire training resources, new technology, specialized equipment and safety resources.

Recommendation # 32: Ensure when there is a major fire, large-scale explosion or similar event that warrants national media coverage that the USFA be a more visible advocate, provide commentary, provide data, interpretation and analysis in support of local fire authorities.

Recommendation #33: Recognize that the study of the U.S. fire problem could benefit from examining success models elsewhere and that the USFA should have a major role in brokering an international flow of information on such issues as technology development, training initiatives, and cultural aspects of fire prevention.

Recommendation about the Future

Recommendation #34: As a starting point for rebuilding, the Panel requests that the Director, Congress and President of the United States create a commission to continue the work begun in *America Burning*. Due to the continuing seriousness of the fire problem in the United States, the Blue Ribbon Panel suggests this body begin its work in

Washington, D.C. in June of 1999 and complete its work in eighteen months time.

Appendix C

Documents provided by USFA for Blue Ribbon Panel Review

1. FEMA budget documents for 1997-1998, including FY 1998 Allocations, Staffing & Expenses
2. USFA Organizational Chart
3. NETC Personnel Report
4. FEMA Organizational Chart
5. USFA Mission Statement
6. FEMA Manual, Chapter 18: USFA
7. Public Law 93-498 and all subsequent updates
8. FEMA Fire Statutory Authority as of June 1998
9. Service Indicators for USFA and NFA for last three fiscal years and projections for the current year
10. 1996 USFA Annual Report
11. 1997 USFA Annual Report
12. Significant accomplishments of USFA/NFA last three years
13. Significant program challenges that affect USFA and NFA
14. "Partnership for a Safer Future," FEMA's Strategic Plan for FY 1998 through FY 2007
15. FEMA "Annual Performance Plan," FY 1999
16. Stakeholders Meeting: FEMA/USFA/NFA July 20-21, 1997
17. Final Report: USFA Fire Research Agenda Meeting, October 10, 1997
18. *America Burning*
19. "The White Paper to the National Fire Academy Board of Visitors," submitted by the NFA Program Chairs, January 29, 1998
20. Response to the NFA White Paper by Carrye B. Brown
21. "Building a Fire Safe America: The Campaign for a Stronger USFA," presented by the American Federation of Government Employees (Local 1983) FEMA, March 13, 1998
22. EMI Superintendent Response to the White Paper
23. Recommendations of the Workload Task Group
24. MOSS Administrator's Memo regarding the White Paper

Appendix D
Budget Recommendations

Recommendation	Area of Expense	Operating Budget	Research & Dev.	FTE
7.3	NFIRS			Increase \$2,000,000/year
7.4	State Grants for NFIRS	\$200,000/year \$10-20,000/state		
7.5	Outsource Data Analysis		\$250,000/year	
7.7	NFIRS Incentives to states	\$2,000,000		
10	Research and Development Initiatives Research grants		\$10,000,000/year \$2,000,000	
11	National Disaster and Terrorism Mitigation	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000	
13	Community outreach for Hazard Assessment		\$4,000,000	
15.1	NFA Residence room construction	TBD		
15.2	NFA Operations, faculty and staff, course development, delivery costs, student stipends	\$2,500,000		
17	State and local training grants Deliver NFA courses Coordinate delivery of courses	\$100,000/state (\$5,000,000) \$75,000 \$25,000		
Total		\$17,200,000	\$23,750,000	\$2,000,000
Grand Total	\$42,950,000			

Appendix E

USFA Fire Research Agenda Meeting, October 10, 1997

Suggested Areas and Topics for a National Fire Research Agenda

1. The need to revitalize the national fire research effort.
2. The development and use of a national strategy for fire research.
3. Increased research to improve firefighter safety during firefighting and research investigations of all firefighter line of duty deaths.
4. Increased funding for fire research.
5. Improved computer fire modeling and improved fire training through validated computer modeling simulation.
6. Increased research into fire protection systems with appropriate system cost justifications.
7. Structural fire resistance.
8. Increased research into the occurrences of fires by small appliances.
9. Application of newer building climate control and security technologies toward fire safety, occupant evacuation, and fire suppression.
10. Improved wildfire computer prediction modeling, both for theoretical training and incident command.
11. Improved PASS designs and applications.
12. Research to improve limited area sprinkler systems and limited water supply sprinkler systems for residential applications.
13. Validation of fire scene burn patterns investigative techniques.
14. Increased research into the development and application of performance-based codes.
15. Research into the development and use of less combustible home products and materials.
16. Improved portable fire extinguishers for home occupant use and appropriate public educational programs to support use of the same.
17. Development of effective home smoke alarms allowing for adjustment to eliminate false alarms while maintaining basic smoke detector protection.

Appendix F

USFA Government Performance and Results Act Goals for FY2000 *

Annual Performance Goal M.4.1 Using most recently collected incident data, update the understanding of the national fire problem. Analyze, publish and disseminate related data and information that supports the professional decision-making by fire and emergency managers and first responders. Use data as a basis for identifying appropriate targets for the expansion of Project Impact and a subsequent measure of the effectiveness of fire-related Project Impact efforts.

Annual Performance Goal M.4.2 Increase the public awareness of fire hazards and educate public on fire prevention and mitigation. Integrate those strategies and messages into the Project Impact initiative.

Annual Performance Goal M.4.2 Develop solutions and strategies for addressing the Nation's fire problem and topical issues such as terrorism through a program of research and technology transfer to enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of emergency managers and first responders.

Annual Performance Goal P.2.1 Enhance professionalism of the nation's fire service and allied professions through comprehensive training and education, with special emphasis on emergency response to terrorism.

Annual Performance Goal CS.1.1 Increase levels of internal and external customer satisfaction with FEMA services.

* GPRA goals are established by each agency as in accordance with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. GPRA mandates that waste and inefficiency in federal programs are the result of inadequate information on program goals and performance. Each agency, therefore, is required to develop and update annual performance plans (including validated tools for measuring success) which include performance goals and performance budgets. Strategic performance reports are due from each agency on an annual basis indicating success or under-performance for each goal.