

FIRE CHIEFS' REPORT ON ALTERNATIVE REVENUES

The President of the Pinellas County Fire Chiefs appointed a committee to review alternative revenue sources as a means to support and expand countywide specialty teams. The committee has performed a review of revenue sources and identified eleven potential sources that may fulfill or supplement the growing economic needs of the regional teams. These are:

- A. Loss recovery insurance
- B. Hazardous Material permit fees
- C. Gas tax
- D. Inspection fees
- E. Impact fees
- F. EPA emergency response recovery reimbursement fees
- G. Tipping fees at land fill operations
- H. General fund MSTU
- I. License tag fees
- J. False Alarm Ordinance
- K. Non participating fire agency assessment fees

A. LOSS RECOVERY INSURANCE CLAIMS FOR MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS (MVA), HAZ MAT RESPONSES AND TECH RESCUE RESPONSES

This is a cost recovery fee charged for first responder engine companies running to MVAs, HAZ MAT AND TECH RESCUE REPSONSES. It should be noted that not all insurance companies pay, however reports from Cost Recovery Corporation (a private contractor who does third party billing for Fire Departments) reported that the company delivers an average billing of \$700 with an estimated \$350 recovery for each claim filed. The bill is only sent to the person responsible for the accident. Billing of insurance companies when they were not at fault is avoided to prevent bad public relations.

B. HAZARDOUS MATERIAL PERMIT FEES

This is a fee charged specifically to those businesses that generate or store hazardous materials. The permit requires a Hazardous Material Management Plan and assists the first responders as to the location and risk of the products or processes. Fees are used to fund equipment and training of Hazardous Material teams that are needed specifically for incidents involving hazardous material products. Fee examples are from The Milpitas Fire Department in California:

EXAMPLE:

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Fee</u>
Small Chemical user: (doctor, dentist, dry cleaner, photo shop, auto repair, retail sale of propane)	\$ 208
Medium Chemical User: (Body shop, research and design analytical labs and pool supplies)	\$ 520
Large Chemical user: (Plating shops)	\$1040
(Semi conductor)	\$ 624
(Underground tanks)	\$ 832
	\$ 312

C. NINTH CENT FUEL TAX

The tax is a one-cent tax on gas. The tax would generate approximately \$3.5 million per year. The Pinellas County Haz Mat Commander reported that most of the team responses are for fuel spills. The use of monies is very limited and could only be used for public transportation and several enumerated roadway improvements. The tax may be able to generate some funding for roadway and right-of-way maintenance in terms of clean up equipment or supplies.

D. INSPECTION FEES

Inspection fees for plan review and annual inspections are commonly collected throughout portions of Florida and the United States.

Examples of inspection fee rates and types from Fresno County California are as follows:

Plan check and inspection fees examples: FEE

Fire safety Inspection	\$ 160
Plan check: Fire Pump	\$ 190
Underground fire mains; two inspections	\$ 235
Sprinkler system	\$ 235
Hydrant flow test	\$ 80 per hydrant

Lists of inspection fees are numerous and rates vary per jurisdiction. Miami Dade County collects over \$6 million per year in fees from plan reviews, permits and other fire prevention fees.

E. IMPACT FEES:

Impact fees are charges on new construction to pay for needed capital improvements. Some cities and independent districts have adopted fees. The funds are used for additional stations and equipment. Impact fees provide some tax relief to existing property owners who have satisfactory fire protection and should not be taxed to provide the improvements necessary for new development.

(Consideration should be given to collecting fire impact fees within the unincorporated dependent districts to provide property tax relief to the existing homes and businesses currently protected.)

F. EPA EMERGENCY RESPONSE REIMBURSEMENT:

EPA can reimburse up to \$25,000 per incident for costs that local Governments incur in performing temporary emergency response measures. Only costs incurred as a direct result of responses are allowable. To be reimbursed, you must document your costs and certify that you do not have money in your budget for the costs. EPA has reimbursed local Governments for:

1. expendable materials and supplies
2. renting or leasing equipment
3. special technical and laboratory supplies
4. decontamination of equipment
5. evacuation services
6. overtime to pay employees
7. replacement of lost or destroyed equipment.

G. TIPPING FEES:

(To be determined; County doing research)

H. COUNTY GENERAL FUND:

Currently, the marginal costs associated with the Hazardous Material teams are included in the County General fund. General Fund taxes are for countywide services which includes regional teams. Therefore all County taxpayers both in the cities and the unincorporated areas help fund Hazardous Material team's marginal costs. (Marine rescue and tech rescue could be funded through the General Fund if it was a countywide team.)

I. LICENSE TAGS:

Miami Dade is currently looking at legislation to add a fee to License tags to fund the regional teams. This will bear close watching as we may want to do the same if Miami Dade Fire Rescue's efforts are successful.

J. FALSE ALARM ORDINANCE:

A countywide False Alarm Ordinance is recommended to reduce false alarms and generate revenue in terms of fines for non-compliance. At a minimum, the Ordinance would require an agency to secure an alarm contractor to attempt a repair within 24 hours to any facility generating 3 false alarms within a 72-hour period. If no attempt is made in this time frame, the agency would be subject to a \$500 fine.

K. NON PARTICIPATING FIRE AGENCY ASSESSMENT FEE:

Pinellas County Fire Administration has proposed an assessment fee or response fee for Fire Districts not currently participating in the regional Hazardous Material and Technical Rescue Teams. The formula for the assessment charge will be forthcoming.

CONCLUSION:

The Committee is still meeting.